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### **Managing institutional change through distributive leadership approaches: engaging academics and teaching support staff in blended and flexible learning**

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# Managing institutional change through distributive leadership approaches: engaging academics and teaching support staff in blended and flexible learning

## Abstract

Higher Education institutions face a challenge: how to transform traditional learning and teaching to create enhanced learning for current digital age students. In some universities this challenge is acute - particularly in those Universities that focus on blended and flexible learning (BFL), and distance education (DE) approaches. Many universities have emphasised the development of leadership capacity. From 2008 to 2011, utilising a partnership research grant funded by DEHub, Charles Sturt University and Massey University studied their approaches to fostering change in blended and flexible learning and DE. The study research question was: What do the strategies and activities designed to foster change in blended and flexible learning and distance education developed at Charles Sturt University (Australia) and Massey University (NZ) help us to understand about learning leadership?

## Keywords

academics, teaching, support, staff, blended, flexible, learning, approaches, engaging, leadership, managing, distributive, change, institutional

## Disciplines

Arts and Humanities | Social and Behavioral Sciences

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## Authors

Merilyn Childs, Mark Brown, Mike Keppell, Zeffie Nicholas, Carole Hunter, and Natasha Hard

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# Managing institutional change through distributive leadership approaches:

Engaging academics and teaching support staff in blended and flexible learning

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We were very fortunate to have Associate Professor Regine Wagner as the external evaluator for the project. Dr Wagner assisted the project team through a process of conceptual thinking and the subsequent project adjustment, and her ongoing and generous feedback ensured that the final report aligned with the thinking that inspired our research.

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The title of this report was inspired by the thoughts of Moncrieff, J. (1999). *Is Strategy Making a Difference? Long Range Planning*. 32(2), 273-276.

This study has also been reported under the title 'Learning Leadership in Higher Education - the big and small actions of many people'.



# List of acronyms

AACSB	-	The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business
ACER	-	Australian Council for Educational Research
ADPP	-	Associate Degree in Policing Practice
ALTC	-	Australian Learning and Teaching Council
BA	-	Bachelor of Arts
BBS	-	Bachelor of Business Studies
BFL	-	Blended and Flexible Learning
CSU	-	Charles Sturt University
CSUDI	-	Charles Sturt University Degree Initiative
CSUED	-	Charles Sturt University Educational Conference
DE	-	Distance Education
DEHub	-	Distance Education Hub
DELFA	-	Distance Education and Learning Futures Alliance
DVC	-	Deputy Vice Chancellor
ED	-	Educational Designer
ELF	-	Engaging Leadership Framework
FDS	-	Facilitator Development Scheme
FLI	-	Flexible Learning Institute
HC	-	Head Count
LCDF	-	Leadership Capacity Development Framework
LMS	-	Learning Management System
LTS	-	Learning and Teaching Services
MOOC	-	Massive Open Online Course
MU	-	Massey University
NZ	-	New Zealand
OLT	-	Office of Learning and Teaching
PBL	-	Problem Based Learning
PEI	-	Promoting Excellence Initiative
PLE	-	Personal Learning Environment
SES	-	Socio-economic students <sup>4</sup>
SOPS	-	School of Policing Studies
TDAC	-	Teaching Development Advisory Committee
TFS	-	Teaching Fellowship Scheme
TEQSA	-	Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency
UKOU	-	United Kingdom Open University
VET	-	Vocational Education and Training
VPD	-	Viral Personal Development



# Executive Summary

## Introduction

Higher Education institutions face a challenge: how to transform traditional learning and teaching to create enhanced learning for current digital age students. In some universities this challenge is acute - particularly in those Universities that focus on blended and flexible learning (BFL), and distance education (DE) approaches. Many universities have emphasised the development of leadership capacity. From 2008 to 2011, utilising a partnership research grant funded by DEHub, Charles Sturt University and Massey University studied their approaches to fostering change in blended and flexible learning and DE. The study research question was: What do the strategies and activities designed to foster change in blended and flexible learning and distance education developed at Charles Sturt University (Australia) and Massey University (NZ) help us to understand about learning leadership?

## Findings

The study found that, in the contexts of Charles Sturt University and Massey University:

- 1 Learning leadership was enabled by the large and small actions of many people working individually and collectively in relationship to change<sup>1</sup>.
- 2 The large and small actions of many people working individually and collectively in relationship to change were fostered through a range of different operational models.
- 3 Innovation was fostered through delegated leadership, distributive leadership model, faculty scholarship model, networked learning model and diffusion of innovation model.
- 4 Innovation in blended and flexible learning and DE was aligned to strategic institutional intent through the influences of staff within each institution.
- 5 “Innovating”, “influencing others”, “collaborating” and “sharing” had positive connotations.

---

<sup>1</sup> Moncrieff (1999, p. 219).

## Three Key Lessons

Three key lessons emerged from the study. These are discussed in greater detail in the Report:

- 1 Innovation needs to be aligned to institutional vision, and the institution needs to manage the tensions that can exist between alignment, creativity and innovation.
- 2 Good practice in blended and flexible learning and DE needs to be manifested through sustainable, consistent and supported opportunities.
- 3 Regardless of the strategy or activity, commitment to approaches that enable academics to take time, collaborate, share, network and connect are the key to innovation in blended and flexible learning and DE.

## Five Take Home Messages

- 1 Strategies and activities generated from the centre and distributed throughout an institution need to be mapped as a basis for future strategic planning, much in the same way that a course needs to be mapped when undergoing curriculum renewal.
- 2 Strategies and activities generated from the centre could be evaluated from the outside, rather than evaluated as experienced from the inside.
- 3 There is a need to better understand those initiatives that will have maximum impact on a wide range of practices and staff capacity and should, therefore, be strongly supported.
- 4 “Top down” leadership is important; leadership development strategies need to be in place to assist positional leaders to develop leadership capabilities.
- 5 “Micro-leadership” and “micro-influencing” is important; further work is needed to better understand the best ways of supporting micro level activities through, for example, professional networked learning, workloads and resources.

# Deliverables

The following deliverables were achieved (See *Dissemination* following *Chapter 3* for details of other outcomes):

## A wikiResearcher summary of study

<[www.wikiresearcher.org/DEHub\\_Research\\_Projects/Charles\\_Sturt\\_University](http://www.wikiresearcher.org/DEHub_Research_Projects/Charles_Sturt_University)>

## A full report and its findings

Childs, M., Brown, M., Keppell, M., Nicholas, Z., Hunter, C. & Hard, N. (2012). *Managing institutional change through distributive leadership approaches: Engaging academics and teaching support staff in blended and flexible learning*. DEHub, Armidale. Australia, ISBN: 978-1-921597-46-6.

## An institutional analysis

Buchan, J. (2012). The changing nature of learning and teaching at Charles Sturt University 2008-2011. A paper commissioned by Childs, M., Brown, M., Keppell, M., Nicholas, Z., Hunter, C. & Hard, N. (2012). *Managing institutional change through distributive leadership approaches: Engaging academics and teaching support staff in blended and flexible learning*. Retrieved from <<http://learningleadershipstudy.wordpress.com/>>

A summary of this paper can be found in Appendix B of this report.

## Case studies

Eight case studies were developed:

- Childs, M. (2012). *Practice conversations as learning leadership—Charles Sturt University annual educational conferences (CSUEDS)*.
- Brown, M., & Hughes, H. (2012). *Streaming down from the top: implementing a new learning management system in a College of Business*. UNE, Australia : DEHUB. Available from <[docs.google.com/document/d/1RelTBxRBZCJCR7IDPwqRSY6CPAc\\_9Jzx\\_Xe0X7a1z8M/edit](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1RelTBxRBZCJCR7IDPwqRSY6CPAc_9Jzx_Xe0X7a1z8M/edit)>
- Brown, M., Hughes, H., & Symons, S. (2012). *Swimming upstream, micro-level redesign in uncharted waters*. UNE, Australia: DeHub. Available from <[docs.google.com/document/d/14FLBaBC5RDSsMZU9mUprjJh2r-VxzVJk\\_Gsslyh1EfM/edit](https://docs.google.com/document/d/14FLBaBC5RDSsMZU9mUprjJh2r-VxzVJk_Gsslyh1EfM/edit)>
- Keppell, M. J., Hard, N., & Lyon, B. (2012). *Teaching Fellowship Scheme*. UNE, Australia: Dehub. Available from <[eportfolio.csu.edu.au/pebblepad/viewasset.aspx?oid=590812&type=webfolio](http://eportfolio.csu.edu.au/pebblepad/viewasset.aspx?oid=590812&type=webfolio)>
- Hunter, C. (2012). *The introduction of an ePortfolio Tool*. UNE, Australia: DeHub. Available from <[eportfolio.csu.edu.au/pebblepad/viewasset.aspx?oid=428403&type=webfolio&pageoid=428407](http://eportfolio.csu.edu.au/pebblepad/viewasset.aspx?oid=428403&type=webfolio&pageoid=428407)>
- Hunter, C. (2012). *Course conversations as learning leadership - The case of the Blended and Flexible Learning Course Team Symposiums*. UNE, Australia: Dehub. Available from <[eportfolio.csu.edu.au/pebblepad/viewasset.aspx?oid=491014&type=webfolio](http://eportfolio.csu.edu.au/pebblepad/viewasset.aspx?oid=491014&type=webfolio)> [Retrieved 18<sup>th</sup> May 2012].
- Edlington, B., Keppell, M. K., & Hard, N. (2012). *Shifting to student-centred facilitation of learning through professional development initiatives*. UNE, Australia: Dehub. Available from <[eportfolio.csu.edu.au/pebblepad/viewasset.aspx?oid=590727&type=webfolio](http://eportfolio.csu.edu.au/pebblepad/viewasset.aspx?oid=590727&type=webfolio)>
- Rafferty, J., Keppell, M. K., & Hard, N. (2012). *The nexus between space, time, teaching and learning*. UNE, Australia: Dehub. Available from <[eportfolio.csu.edu.au/pebblepad/viewasset.aspx?oid=590770&type=webfolio](http://eportfolio.csu.edu.au/pebblepad/viewasset.aspx?oid=590770&type=webfolio)>

A summary of each case study is provided in the body of the Report. Detailed versions can be found in Appendix D. In addition, html-rich versions of the cases can be found at <<http://learningleadershipstudy.wordpress.com/>>.

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# Chapter 1 About the Study

## The context of the study

This project was funded by DEHub through *the Australian Government Department of Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education (DIISRTE)* and developed by the lead institution, Charles Sturt University Australia (via the Flexible Learning Institute) and partner institution, Massey University New Zealand.

Both Charles Sturt and Massey University operate over multiple campuses and are the largest distance education providers in Australia and New Zealand with a combined total of close to 40,000 distance students choosing to study at these universities each year. Like Universities throughout the world, Charles Sturt University and Massey University have faced multiple challenges. In the five years prior to this research (2008-2011) both Universities had implemented a range of strategies designed to shift each institution towards a new, and dynamic ‘normal’ that takes for granted the presence of new technologies in learning and teaching, and in people’s lives. To address these changing demands, a wide range of institutional strategies were adopted, some of which focused on capacity building in the contexts of specific change strategies related to BFL and DE. Additionally, each institution has implemented a variety of vision and mission statements, strategic plans, broad change strategies and distributed activities to adapt to the changing landscapes that shape, and are shaped by, what goes on inside the sector and individual Universities

Associate Professor Marilyn Childs, Professor Mark Brown, Professor Mike Keppell, Dr Zeffie Nicholas, Ms Carole Hunter and Ms Natasha Hard authored the final report, however, other staff played important roles in writing case studies, as noted in acknowledgments.. The project was overseen by an External Advisory Group which met on five occasions during the life of the project to provide formative feedback. This group comprised members from Charles Sturt University, Massey University and the broader higher education field. These included Associate Professor Marian Tulloch, Executive Director, Division of Learning & Teaching Services, CSU; Dr Andrea Crampton, Sub-Dean, Faculty of Science, CSU; Dr Zeffie Nicholas, CSU Ontario; Dr Linda Leach, Senior Lecturer, College of Education, MU; Ralph Springett, President of the Extramural Students’ Society, MU; Professor Ormond Simpson, Consultant at University of London External Programme, Associate Lecturer at UKOU.

A range of staff from both universities were involved in the development of the research project and members from both institutions travelled to each other’s respective institutions to strengthen the research partnership and sharing of information between institutions. The research partners wanted to learn from each other and from the strategies and activities that had been adopted by the respective institutions, in order to refine and improve approaches to fostering change.

To this end, a specific research question evolved:

*What do the strategies and activities designed to foster change in blended and flexible learning and distance education developed at Charles Sturt University (Australia) and Massey University (NZ) help us to understand about learning leadership?*

The research was designed to be useful to the respective institutions. The institutional contexts mattered to the study and, for this reason, a summary of the changing nature of learning and teaching at both CSU and MU is provided in Appendices B and C. By sharing stories of adaptation (written here as case studies), the research partners built knowledge and understanding of each other's approaches to change. The study also provided insights beyond the specific cases; the limitations of the study and the challenges the research team resolved provided opportunities for dialogue and clarification as well as theory formation and the development of principles and further research questions that could be usefully shared with the higher education sector.

## The context of the study – the researchers' lenses

This research was developed by research partners who were positioned in the Flexible Learning Institute at CSU and the Distance Education and Learning Futures Alliance (DELFA) at MU. The strategies chosen for this study were of interest to the FLI and the DELFA. Six of the eight case studies were of activities that both the FLI and the DELFA had participated in. Four of the CSU case studies were generated from within the FLI, which places value on distributive leadership through the Teaching Fellowship Scheme (TFS) (Keppell, O'Dwyer, Lyon & Childs, 2010). Two case studies (CSUEDs and ePortfolios) were generated from outside the FLI. This positioning shaped the study. All the strategies were positively framed through the case studies as good approaches to fostering innovation. The case studies were derived through "learning and teaching" approaches to change rather than, say, through "faculty-lead" approaches to change or viral<sup>2</sup> approaches to change. This lens shaped and illuminated the study with a richness and specificity derived, in part, through insider-knowledge. At the same time, this lens prescribed their meaning.

## Focus and refocus of the project

**The study began with an interest in distributive leadership and had originally been titled:**

Managing institutional change through distributive leadership approaches: Engaging academics and teaching support staff in blended and flexible learning.

The initial intention of the research was to describe, through case studies, the ways in which strategies based on distributive leadership lead to activities designed to transform approaches to BFL and DE. One of the research team, Mike Keppell, had established a *Teaching Fellowship Scheme* at CSU in 2008 that was based on a distributive leadership approach. He was interested in further researching this approach to capacity building. The research team found, however, that not all the strategies purposively chosen for the study were designed as distributive leadership

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<sup>2</sup> Whereby a technology, tool or teaching strategy is quickly spread from one person to another (See page 26).

approaches, although all were implemented (at the strategy level) in one way or another to *enable* innovation, practice experimentation, scholarship, peer learning, collegiality, sharing and influence in response to institutional imperatives.

Part way through the study, the conceptual focus of the research shifted in response to findings. As insiders, the researchers knew that Universities were large and complex places, and institutional change was by no means unilateral, mono-directional or indeed predictable. Both CSU and MU are multi-campus, diverse institutions, with delegated leadership vested in many places and at many levels, planned and unplanned, allocated and assumed. It was clear that transformation of practice at a local level generated institutional change upwards and outwards, and meeting top-down institutional change processes somewhere in the middle (Greer, 2005).

Although distributive leadership (and the Keppell model of the TFC) remained significant, it was important to appreciatively enquire about other approaches represented through the cases and to develop an inductive understanding as they were developed. In late 2011, in response to lessons learnt, the focus of the research was amended. The research team realised that a range of different approaches to managing institutional change were being used by the partners, and exclusive research focus on distributive leadership did not reflect this finding. Following a research workshop at MU in November 2011, and consultation with the Evaluator, the project focus was expanded to become the current research question:

*What do the strategies and activities designed to foster change in blended and flexible learning and distance education developed at Charles Sturt University (Australia) and Massey University (NZ) help us to understand about learning leadership?*

The research team also adopted the term “learning leadership”. In this study, the term “learning leadership” felt like a “natural fit” to the research partners, as the term had currency and some traction, particularly at CSU. Despite borrowing the term from Scott, Coates and Anderson (2008), but, in this study, its meaning is not quite as conceived by Scott et al; it does not refer only to “leaders” or to those in roles of authority. The strategies explored in this study were directed from above through delegated leadership but manifested in opportunities for pockets of learning-oriented, learning-driven and activity-driven change through innovation in BFL and DE.

For this reason, the term “learning leadership” was used to refer to those working as “leaders, change agents and others who see the necessity of change” (Kezar, 2001, p. iv) in blended and flexible learning and DE. Sometimes this “necessity of change” was directly aligned with an institutional strategic intent such as a University plan. At other times it was in direct response to poor student feedback for a single subject or because a group of academics made a decision to redesign a learning experience. In this study, it became clear that the capacity to see the necessity for change was not unique to those in roles of authority but was widely located across each institution, in every area occupied by staff - any of whom may have, at different times and for varying reasons, displayed learning leadership.

Change is a “disorderly process” (Kezar, 2001, p. 119) particularly at the socio-cultural level of an institution where shared ownership and collaboration is valued - as it was at both CSU and MU. Learning leadership sat within and was part of this disorderly process. It was connected and multi-directional and not owned nor inhabited by any one person or role. The term, “learning leadership”, is, therefore, used as a collective noun - an organisational “hum” (after Childs, 2000, p. 49) - made possible through the sum total of strategies and activities, and the connected actions of individuals and groups. Despite the project adjustment, the research focus remained on: building knowledge; developing an understanding of authentic, situated approaches to change that offered a powerful conduit for building “street level leadership” (per Childs, 2006, p.1); sharing knowledge, skills and information as a basis for whole-of-institution cultural change driven through practice.

A second project adjustment was also necessary. The original methodology planned to adopt a “design based” research approach. This approach was abandoned soon after commencement of the project. Design based research is quite similar to action research, and involves participants in real-time, cyclical development of emerging learning designs. The focus of the research on institutional change and on leadership as told through case studies derived largely from existing data did not align with a design-based approach. That said, insights into the strategies, activities and practice experimentation of each case study are provided in the detailed case studies.

## The problem of the study

The study assumed that it would be possible to derive findings and principles about learning leadership by investigating and sharing existing strategies and activities used in a number of case studies, that these would make sense as data to be interpreted through findings and principles. This assumption was put to the test throughout this study. Universities are complex, changing spaces characterised by autonomy and academic freedom on the one hand and high degrees of delegated leadership and decision-making “from above” on the other. Although all the strategies and activities reported in this paper were designed to generate innovation in blended and flexible learning and DE, they cannot be considered as “apples in the same basket”.

To slice across the complexity of universities - as this study attempted to do - and develop cases that spanned the institution at macro, meso and micro levels sometimes made sense but at other times led to a conceptual fruit salad. If anything, the research team learnt that any attempt to introduce a new approach to fostering innovation - such as a distributive leadership or other leadership framework - needs to carefully consider the complex relationships, connections, strategies and activities that already exist within an institution. We revisit this issue in the Conclusion.

## Study approach

A case study method was adopted in order to improve the research team’s understanding of the strategies and activities adopted by universities to strengthen their innovative capacity in learning and teaching, with a specific focus on blended and flexible learning and DE. Through the development of descriptive and historical cases, the research aimed to understand “the connections between situated knowing and doing” (Zepke, 2007, p. 303). By developing



descriptive case studies (Yin, 1981) the project partners aimed to build knowledge and understanding of the strategies and activities each had adopted to strengthen the capacity of their respective institutions to be innovative, future-looking and “change capable” (Scott et al., 2008, p. iii). The historical case studies provided the data from which analysis was drawn and theory formed. This “bottom-up” approach sought to build understanding of what was happening based on “thinking and discovery” rather than applying a theoretical framework to the study (Bakan, 1967).

That said, the research team were aware that some of the strategies already had theoretical and operational frameworks. For example, it was well known that TFS (See 2.2.3, *The Flexible Learning Institute Teaching Fellowship Scheme*, CSU, 2008-2011) had been developed using a distributive leadership approach (Keppel et al, 2010). The CSUED internal Learning and Teaching Conferences (See 2.2.1 The CSU annual learning and teaching conferences, CSUEDs, 2008-2010) had been developed as peer-learning opportunities. *Stream* at MU (See 2.2.4 and 2.2.5, MU 2008-2010) had been implemented drawing on theories of successful innovation from the literature on change management. Insights from the existing theoretical and operational frameworks were used in this study and informed the literature review.

## Case Study Method

See Appendix D: Existing data used to inform the case studies.

Four broad learning and teaching strategies at CSU and MU were chosen as a focus for the case studies: the CSU annual learning and teaching conference; introduction of new technology (CSU and MU); the TFS (CSU); and collaborative curriculum renewal. The resulting eight case studies are outlined in Table 1. Examining the case studies provided the opportunity to “take stock” of the chosen strategies and activities that had been put in place by the *institution* and reflect on their ability to foster change in BFL and DE at the two respective institutions. The strategies and activities depicted in the CSU case studies were disparately developed by different people and groups, although some cross-over or collaboration may have occurred; the strategies were implemented within the same institutional frameworks and wider sector influences. Comparing the CSU and MU strategies as cases and applying a common thematic lens to them provided the opportunity to examine the different strategies in a new light.

Level of institution	Learning & teaching strategy	Case Study
Macro (institution wide)	Annual learning & teaching conference (CSU)	The Charles Sturt University Annual Education Conference (CSUEDs) 2008-2010
	Introduction of new technology	Introduction of an ePortfolio tool (CSU, 2009-2010)
	Teaching Fellowship Scheme	The Flexible Learning Institute Teaching Fellowship Scheme (CSU, 2008-2011)
Meso (School or Faculty Level)	Introduction of new technology	Stream in Business (MU, 2009-2011)
Micro (Pedagogy, subject or course Level) <sup>3</sup>	Introduction of new technology	Stream in the Social Sciences (MU, 2009-2010)
Micro	Teaching Fellowship Scheme	Dr John Rafferty, Murray School of Education, Charles Sturt University. Informal learning spaces-interactions between time, space and teaching and learning (CSU, 2011)
Micro	Teaching Fellowship Scheme	Brad Edlington, School of Policing, Charles Sturt University. Learning leadership through problem-based learning (CSU, 2011-2012)
Micro	Collaborative curriculum renewal	Redesigning courses through course team symposiums (CSU)

Table 1: Learning and teaching strategies at the macro, meso and micro levels

## Theoretical underpinnings of the case studies

The theoretical underpinnings of this study were derived, in part, from an initial focus on distributive leadership and, in part, from the different models of leadership approaches identified in the case studies themselves. The theoretical underpinnings are:

- **Distributive leadership**
- **Delegated leadership**
- **Faculty scholar**
- **Networked learning**
- **Diffusion of innovation**

A summary of the key concepts associated with each of these approaches is presented further below.

<sup>3</sup> Pedagogy, paper or program level (New Zealand)



It is worth acknowledging and noting that there has recently been an enormous contribution to advancing an understanding of leadership and capacity building of leadership in higher education (see for example Barnes, Ducasse, Johnson, Oates, Thomas, & Pannan, 2008; Bennett & Hemsall, 2010; Lefoe, Parrish, Hart, Smigiel, & Pannan, 2008; Scott, Coates & Anderson, 2008; Smigiel, Govin, Deller-Evans, Pannan, Szorenyi-Reischl, & Donnan, 2011; Vilkinas, Leask & Ladyshevsky, 2009). Fanned by the Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC), funding priorities via the *Leadership for Excellence in Learning and Teaching* grants provided the sector with opportunities to conduct projects related to three broad themes<sup>4</sup> associated with “leadership”. This focus produced numerous projects and reports that grappled with and made recommendations about establishing quality learning and teaching through leadership capacity building. Many recommend a particular approach to leadership development; often this approach was tied to distributive leadership (Barnes et al., 2008; Lefoe et al., 2008; Smigiel et al., 2011; Bennett & Hemsall, 2010) and to leadership development programs, for example, for specific roles such as Course Coordinators (for example, Vilkinas et al., 2009) or the Faculty Scholar (Barnes et al., 2008).

Amidst this “swirl” of research and recommendations within the sector, CSU and MU have implemented strategies and activities designed to foster innovation in blended and flexible learning and DE, with case study analysis showing the following specific leadership development and or innovation approaches to be most important:

## Distributive leadership (model and approach)

Distributive leadership, in its simplest form, describes a way of leading that is shared among two or more people (Brown & Gioia, 2002). It is described as a type of leadership that is dispersed, collective, inclusive, participatory and supportive (Elmore, 2000). Distributive leadership can provide positive and supportive conditions for innovative and creative activity. Lefoe, Smigiel and Parrish (2007, p. 305) describe that, in universities, the term distributive leadership “... implies a distribution of power within the sociocultural context ... and a sharing of knowledge, of practice and reflection through collegiality”. Distributive leadership creates the conditions for a more lateral structure of decision making and hence a “flatter” structure of governance. What distributive leadership is not is a delegation of tasks (Zepke, 2007).

The principles that underpin a distributive leadership approach must be genuine and involve real contexts, with real tasks, that provide the opportunity for multiple perspectives and a collaborative decision making process. Distributive leadership provides opportunities for everyone to participate in key decisions and activities. It fosters community engagement, provides opportunities for professional and personal growth, and enables sustained progress despite inevitable changes in leadership over time (Keppell et al., 2010; Keppell, Suddaby & Hard, 2011). Distributive leadership can create a shared sense of community that encourages active engagement in learning and collaborative problem solving. The result is greater involvement and ownership. Lefoe et al. (2007, p. 308) describe the benefits of a distributive approach as one that:

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<sup>4</sup> For 2012, these three themes were also adopted by the Office for Learning and Teaching (OLT), which replaced the ALTC, and has continued to fund a Leadership in Excellence in L & T program.

- **Generates engagement**
- **Acknowledges and recognises leadership irrespective of position**
- **Focuses on people's strengths**
- **Incorporates shared responsibility and accountability**
- **Is different things in different contexts**
- **Is enduring**
- **Requires the development of strong relationships and networks**
- **Is about capacity building and development**
- **Assists and informs succession planning**

Distributive leadership holds a significant place within this study even though it is not the sole descriptor of learning leadership observed. Distributive and distributed practices are inherently implied in all case studies discussed in this paper. In addition, the case studies generated from the TFS reflect the ongoing commitment of the Director of the FLI (Professor Mike Keppell) to distributive leadership approaches to design-based innovation.

## **Delegated leadership**

The ability to wisely and effectively delegate is a quality that can be crucial to successful leadership practice (House & Aditya, 1997). A delegation of tasks or a delegation of position can at times have the connotation of a managerial standpoint; however, in this instance we define it as a restructure of work, or position from one person to another. The key element is about how the delegation occurs and that the act of delegation can in fact empower people (Rayner & Gunter, 2005). Briggs (2001) suggests that "delegation carries with it an element of dispersed leadership and a significant level of internal accountability" (p. 232). It is also a concept associated with a "top-down" model of distributed leadership (Bolden, 2011). House and Aditya (1997, p. 457) describe delegated leadership as "...when the job of managing involves rather large complex organizations, several generic functions of management can be divided among two or more leaders, and performed contemporaneously ...".

MacBeath (2006), in a study conducted on what distributed leadership looked like in eleven UK schools defined six models of distribution at play. One model involved the delegation of leadership roles and positions and tasks; "...those involved in delegated leadership roles gain mastery of the principles of leading and show signs of being able to perform with or without ... supervision" and opportunities may be created "... for them to share their expertise more broadly" (MacBeath, 2006, p. 363p. 363). The critical message here is that delegated leadership

can provide the necessary conditions for learning about leadership and being able to “share” this learning with others.

A critical component of delegated leadership and the act of delegation is that there are clearly defined job tasks, reporting structures and decision-making processes (Briggs, 2001). Another critical component of effective delegated leadership is concerns the relationships at play. Effective delegation can promote and encourage positive relationships through the interactions and transactions that occur by providing the right conditions for people to make decisions and engage in open communication (Briggs, 2001; House & Aditya, 1997; Rayner & Gunter, 2005).

**This study will highlight effective means of delegated leadership through the case studies.**

## **Faculty scholar**

Faculty scholar models are increasingly being used in university settings (see, for example, Lefoe et al., 2007; Smigiel et al., 2011) as a method to encourage and build capacity in leadership in creativity and innovation in learning and teaching. Faculty scholar models adopt a distributive leadership process. The aim of this process is to have a cascading effect on practice across disciplines, faculty and the institution (Lefoe et al., 2007; Keppell, 2012). The intention of the process is that a new critical mass of new leaders will mentor, lead and build the capacity of others. Historically, in Australia, faculty scholar models began with an emphasis on trying to find the best methods of promoting effective and sustainable academic staff development (see Gray & Radloff, 2006; Parker, Zadnik, Burgess, Finlayson, Guthrie, Ladyszewski & Prichard, 1995).

A faculty scholar model supports strategic change through activities that are entrenched in genuine learning tasks that build capacity for leadership in higher education (Lefoe et al., 2007; Lefoe et al., 2008; Smigiel et al., 2011). Through strategically and intentionally designed activities, academics work collegially on projects employing methods such as action learning or action research to evaluate and further their work both formatively and summatively. Faculty scholars, through their work, promote communication and a sharing of ideas. The model utilises a framework of distributive leadership which provides opportunities for collaboration and development of capacity. The faculty scholar model, as described here and documented in such work as Lefoe et al. (2007) and Smigiel et al. (2011) is strategic in that it employs specific tasks that scholars must proceed through and complete. One critical task is professional development in leadership and distributive leadership processes before project work begins. Therefore, the focus is not only on investigating practice in a specific domain and then disseminating results, ideas and suggestions through traditional and conventional means, and hoping that the messages are taken up or adopted by audiences; it is also about learning about the leadership practices necessary to ensure effective dissemination, development, implementation of ideas and practices.

Within this study, faculty scholar models have been adopted and are a useful means in which to describe the phenomena observed, and to explain the learning leadership observed.

## Networked learning

In this report, the concept of networked learning will be used to define practices that include peer and collaborative learning. Premised on Wenger's (1998) "communities of practice", these ways of learning can have intense and sustainable effects on creativity and innovation, and the infusion and adoption of such ideas. Networked learning involves participants sharing knowledge and experience with one another; it happens through existing social networks or enabled learning opportunities. Networked learning spreads information through both formal and informal social structures; it involves communication that can "become viral", and is participant driven. Networked learning also implies that every participant is a contributor, either in a traditional learner or teacher role.

For positive change to occur and be sustained there needs to be a change primarily in participants' belief systems. Networked learning provides the opportunity for people to change because it allows for communication between peers to exchange their views, concerns and pressures in a safe environment. Networked learning can provide local, contextual and relevant information about common goals, issues and pressures. It provides a forum in which local (and at times, external) experts can be called upon to facilitate and guide the learning process.

## Diffusion of innovation (theory)

Diffusion of innovation is a way of describing how social change occurs. Rogers (2004, p. 13) defines diffusion as "... the process through which an innovation, defined as an idea perceived as new, spreads via certain communication channels over time among the members of a social system". Diffusion theories have their origins in the explanation of the adoption of technological change by farmers (Rogers, 1995, 2004). Diffusion of innovation theory is a valuable framework from which to attempt to understand diffusion and adoption of new ideas (Ashley, 2009).

The Diffusion of Innovation model is a five-step process faced by actors: knowledge or awareness of an innovation; persuasion—that is, forming a positive and favourable attitude to the innovation; decision—that is, a commitment to the adoption of the innovation; implementation—that is, using the innovation; and confirmation of the adoption decision of the innovation (Rogers, 1995). The diffusion of new ideas is dependent upon, the innovation, communication channels, time and the contextual social system (Rogers, 1995).

The key element in using the diffusion of innovation theory is the adoption of the idea or innovation. Ashley (2009, p. 37) notes that the "...key lever of change in the diffusion process is the adoption of an innovation". The decision to adopt is heavily dependent on the innovation decisions of others and, with empirical data demonstrating innovation follows the s-curve, only about 10-25 per cent of system members need to adopt an innovation before a quite rapid take-up by remaining members occurs (Rogers, 1995). The characteristics which determine an innovation's rate of adoption are: relative advantage; compatibility; complexity; trialability; and observability.

Rogers (2004, p. 19), in discussing the history and evolution of the diffusion of innovation theory, adds significant additions to the theory: "the critical mass"; this is the point where

enough people have adopted the innovation and further diffusion is self-sustaining; the need to focus on networks as a way of investigating and understanding how a new idea spreads; reinvention which is the process whereby the innovation is changed by adopters.

The Diffusion of Innovation theory offers a powerful lens through which to describe some of the case studies in this study. Its premise is distributive, empowering and collaborative, and collegial.

## Concluding comments

The descriptions provided above about the identified leadership approaches observed in the case studies were not meant to be exhaustive but to provide a brief explanatory description of the approach. Relevance of each of these approaches will be made explicit within each of the case studies. CSU and MU both have some form of formal “top-down” approach to leadership. For example, CSU’s Leadership and Management Development Framework is intended to contribute to the improvement of the organisation’s performance by:

- 1 Identifying the essential qualities and accountabilities required of high performing leaders in a higher education environment.
- 2 Providing a range of development opportunities and resources to enable the University to build its leadership capability.
- 3 Embedding the leadership qualities and accountabilities into a range of University processes such as: selection and recruitment; targeted leadership development programs; formal performance management systems and reward systems; and workforce planning, including career development and succession planning <[www.csu.edu.au/division/hr/career-devel/leadership-devel](http://www.csu.edu.au/division/hr/career-devel/leadership-devel)>

There were a significant set of leadership capacity building strategies in place at the time of researching the cases, including:

- Executive Development Program
- A suite of role-related forums (e.g. Heads of School; Course directors; Middle Management)
- A Graduate Certificate in University Leadership & Management
- Leadership Development for Women Program

However, these institution-wide strategies focussed on leadership and management rather than on learning leadership. There exists a sectoral trend towards a strategy for developing leadership and management. As noted in Jones, Lefoe, Harvey and Ryland (2012), “new models are needed for the higher education sector”. The authors outline a “self-enabling” tool trialled at four universities to foster “collective collaboration” approaches to distributed leadership (Harvey & Ryland, 2012, p. 67). The same authors are now conducting Office of Learning and Teaching (OLT) research that “aims to develop a systematic, evidence-based benchmarking framework for distributed leadership to build leadership capacity in learning and teaching” at Australian Universities.

Although such a framework had yet to be developed at either institution at the time the case studies were written, the strategies and activities reported in the case studies reflected a meeting point between macro, meso and micro influences. Both institutions fostered adaptation, innovation and experimentation without necessarily calling this “leadership” or “learning leadership”. Change management was achieved through a complex web of horizontal and lateral processes, involving a wide variety of constellations of people and resources over time, place and space in order to build agency through conversations and activities that engaged staff with “the core purposes of the institution” (Fullan & Scott, 2009, p. 39) in ways that were meaningful to the social and disciplinary contexts within which change was being fostered. Boud (1999) argued that an emphasis for change needed to be placed on peer learning and McCulla, Scott and Dinham (2009, p. 3) proposed that “quiet conversations in small circles” provided a means whereby “teaching excellence in universities” could be promoted. The process of enabling situated leadership through “the distribution of power through collegial sharing of knowledge, of practice, and reflection within the socio-cultural context of the university” (Parrish & Lefoe, 2008, p. 2) was reflected in the case studies.

# Chapter 2 Case Studies

The following section is organised in the following way:

There are eight case studies. They were written by different members of the research team and organised to communicate, in a common way, information under the headings: Overview, Methodology, Background, Visions and initial targets, Strategies and activities, Outcomes, Challenges and limitations, and Acknowledgements. They were then organised under headings of interest to the research: Connections, collegiality and networks; Reflective practice and practice experimentation; and Reflections on learning leadership.

The case studies are presented below in the form of brief general summaries which provide an overview of the ways in which innovation and learning leadership have been encouraged through a leadership strategy. More detailed versions of the case studies can be found in Appendix D and the complete case studies are available online at <<http://learningleadershipstudy.wordpress.com/>>. The online versions include impact and connection maps developed in several cases. Detailed descriptions of the institutional contexts for the cases studies can be found in Appendices B (CSU) and C (MU).

## The case studies

Information about the location of the detailed case studies can be found in the Executive Summary of this report.

### 1. Practice conversations as learning leadership – Charles Sturt University annual educational conferences (CSUEDs)

#### *Case study summary*

Annual CSU Educational Conferences (CSUEDs) were held annually over several days, rotating between the Bathurst, Wagga Wagga and Albury-Wodonga (NSW Australia) campuses, with virtual opportunities for Ontario staff (Canada) to attend (2010 and 2011). Each year the CSUED offers a different theme, developed as a reflection of internal CSU strategic directions, and external developments in the disciplinary, professional and policy landscapes shaping learning and teaching in Higher Education. Planning for the CSUEDs rotated each year between the Education for Practice Institute, the Division of Learning and Teaching Services, and the Flexible Learning Institute. Respective hosts shape the focus, key-note speakers and activities. Keynote speakers of international reputation presented at the conference and staff were given the opportunity to participate in plenary, papers and workshops that range from presentations by novice presenters and early career faculty to highly experienced ones.



Despite the conferences' voluntary attendance status, the significant travel often required due to the dispersed nature of the CSU campuses across New South Wales, and competition with external conferences and other teaching requirements, attendance at the CSUEDs has grown during the past few years from 120 staff in 2008, to 190 in 2010. Each CSUED had a slightly different focus, each reflective of an overarching aim - the showcase learning and teaching innovation at CSUED. Conference themes reflect national and international developments, but are also deeply relevant to the CSU Mission and its strategic directions; including Educational Interactions and Curricula (2008), Leading and Learning in Higher Education (2009), Educating for 2020 and Beyond (2010) and Transforming University Education: Developing a Culture of Collaboration, Integration and Sustainability (2011).

The following statement was made about the CSUEDs (Tulloch, Keppell & Higgs, 2008, p. 1):

*One of the successful ways in which CSU has built impetus around learning and teaching has been through internal conferences where good practice and scholarship in teaching are shared. The CSU Learning and Teaching conference has become a major strategy for the dissemination of good practice within the University, generating enthusiasm, new ideas and collaborative projects. Because many delegates travel to the conference there is a strong commitment to the activity and an intensity of engagement.*

CSUEDs have been developed with the view that teaching conferences provide a model of professional development. "Attending learning and teaching conferences" was identified by Scott et al. (2008, p. 96) as a formal approach to leadership development, although potentially less favoured by academics than learning on-the-job. Thus, to encourage staff to attend, it is necessary that internal learning and teaching conferences have high relevance, are specific, interesting, and provide participants with a sense of community and participation. Such learning and teaching conferences have also gained popularity in Australian Universities as a mechanism for celebrating achievements and experimentation, and as an institutional means for encouraging certain directions in learning and teaching conversations, practices and collaborations.

The hosting body allocates resources from the respective global budget to the task, enhanced through an additional budget allocation. In 2008-2009, the budget allocation was derived from the ALTCs Promoting Excellence Initiative (PEI). In 2010-2012, the budget allocation was by the DVC Academic, with the funds managed through a Division of Learning and Teaching Services cost centre. During 2008-2011, the CSUEDs have progressively matured in planning and focus, for example, prior to 2009, registration and planning for the CSUEDs were managed via email and desk-top files. In 2009 a new step was taken, and the CSUEDs moved into an online registration portal. This step was taken for a number of reasons, including as a means of ensuring that the CSUED conference lead CSU staff into managing their own registration in an online environment, as per standard industry practice. Whilst the maturing vision has deepened the focus of the CSUEDs, the original goals as an institutional strategy remain largely the same.



### What did the CSUED case study help us to understand about learning leadership?

The case study highlighted how an institutional strategy, initiated through delegated leadership, can trigger constellations of institutional activity, through individual and collaborative situated responses. Funded from the Office of the Deputy Vice Chancellor, and more recently partially funded by four Faculty Deans, leadership was delegated to a Learning Leaders Committee populated by those in leadership roles such as the Directors and Deputy Directors of the Education for Practice and Flexible Learning Institutes, Sub-Deans Learning and Teaching, Divisional Head of Learning and Teaching Services, and so on.

Operationally the CSUEDs were organised through delegated leadership; however, as an event, the CSUEDs aimed to bring together the CSU community, and had an explicit intention of building networks and sharing innovation. Staff who attended developed their innovations at all levels of the institution through multiple means and in authentic contexts, which often involved groups and teams of people. Presentations at CSUED were aligned to strategic intent in the sense that they responded to the themes of the conferences and engaged colleagues in dialogue about innovations at CSU. However, although aligned, considerable diversity in interpretation also existed, reflecting the breadth of meaning given to alignment. “Learning leadership” was interpreted as a desire to showcase and celebrate, innovative learning and teaching achievements with colleagues - to be part of a community that was “thinking aloud” about how to respond to challenges faced within and external to the CSU learning and teaching environment. The CSUEDs brought together stories of innovation that had been fostered through distributive and delegated leadership, faculty scholarship, diffusion of innovation and networked learning.

## 2. The introduction of an ePortfolio tool, CSU

### *Case study summary*

In February 2009, CSU adopted PebblePad as its university-wide personal learning ePortfolio platform, with the aim of establishing a university-wide culture around personal learning that promoted self-management and ownership. The PebblePad implementation was established in the first instance through delegated leadership to a project team. The project team adopted a partially-devolved model based on “viral professional development (VPD) (Dalby, 2008). This model draws from the popular definition of “viral”, whereby a technology, tool or teaching strategy quickly spreads from one person to another. The implementation team felt that this model suited the CSU climate at the time when staff and students were already dealing with significant institutional change (Hunter & Stewart, 2010). This model also allowed CSU to deliberately encourage and expect multiple levels of engagement depending on the academics’ own readiness and comfort zones. The strategic intent was to foster early adopters to use the tool, and through that adoption, create exemplars and a community of practice that could support further alignment.

While portfolios have been around for some time (Butler, 2006), a number of factors have led to increased awareness and adoption of portfolios and, especially, ePortfolios (their digital counterparts) in recent years by a range of Australian educational providers. The growth in the use of ePortfolios has reflected a sectoral shift towards more learner-centred, reflective and holistic teaching and learning approaches and the increasing recognition of the need to develop self-directed, independent and lifelong learners with strong digital literacy skills. (For a detailed discussion, see the ePortfolio case study.)

CSU formed part of a “second wave” of adopters from 2007-2009 (Hunter, 2007). The adoption of PebblePad as its university-wide personal learning ePortfolio platform came in response to a range of drivers for the use of ePortfolios at CSU (Hunter & Uys, 2009). The main drivers came at an institutional level. These included CSU’s key objective of being a leader in the provision of excellence in education for the professions, the need to develop lifelong learning skills, varied assessment strategies that support the development of graduate attributes and the need to have a place for students to record, monitor and reflect upon their achievements.

A needs analysis (Hunter, 2007) conducted previously with key stakeholders was used to identify academics already using portfolios (paper- or web-based) in a positive and meaningful way with their students, were enthusiastic about using new technologies to support this work and were willing to share their knowledge, experience and resources with their peers. Participating academics were supported by a range of strategies, and shared their ideas and successes with others. These included workshops, just-in-time support resources (for example, website, worksheets and video tutorials), support networks (for example Yammer, PebblePad support forum, blog). Early adopters were also supported in their own context by school-based educational designers and the ePortfolio Project team, as well as support resources that communicated a consistent and clear set of key messages and “seeded” short pieces of relevant content that had an instant effect.

#### **What did the ePortfolio case study help us to understand about learning leadership?**

The role of the implementation strategy in this process is difficult to establish from the limited data, but it seems that the biggest impact has been to develop a complex interrelationship between: ongoing dialogue with members of the ePortfolio Project team; the enabling of network spaces for products and ideas to be shared (though the effectiveness of these networks in terms of depth and breadth of impact can not be established and requires further research); and the participants’ existing knowledge as well as new experiences and conversations occurring outside of the implementation strategy. These kinds of complex relationships make it impossible to form any conclusions about the impact of the implementation strategy on these participants’ development as learning leaders beyond noting that it has been part of the process.

The data from this case study appeared to confirm the Townsend & MacBeath (2011) notion that the task of leading and managing an implementation and curriculum change process as complex as the introduction of an ePortfolio strategy is too large for an individual, or even a team. In the ePortfolio implementation, leadership was developed in a number of areas and roles across the institution. It involved:

- **Positional leadership:** Thus, the implementation seems to have provided a landscape for the ePortfolio team to influence others, sometimes significantly, and also to support current institutional positions of learning leadership, such as the Educational Designers.
- **Leadership as activity:** The ePortfolio implementation was part of a wider landscape of influence that allowed members of the CSU community –academic and support staff as well as students – to have a moderate level of breadth and depth of influence on others” understanding and use of ePortfolios.

In this sense, the implementation fostered dense interconnections between community members involved in influencing the work of others, through their own decision making and via the generation of new ideas. These “influencers” largely preferred to think of themselves as just that, instead of leaders in the formal sense. The reluctance to use the term leadership stemmed from a desire for a less formal, more equal power relationship, a desire to influence rather than be responsible for outcomes, and a discord between the perceived uncertainties associated with learning and the definite knowledge which seemed to be expected of leaders. (See the ePortfolio case study).

### 3. Inspiring innovation: the Teaching Fellowship Scheme – CSU

#### *Case study summary*

The Flexible Learning Institute was established through senior leadership at CSU, with the aim of: promoting innovation; transforming educational practice in flexible learning and teaching; fostering research-based teaching; and developing applied research outputs relevant to innovation in flexible learning and teaching. The Director, Professor Keppell, implemented a distributive leadership approach to the development of innovative and transformative practices in blended and flexible learning to underpin the implementation of a Teaching Fellowship Scheme (Keppell et al., 2010, p. 165). The scheme itself relied on delegated leadership in an operational sense in that the Scheme was facilitated by the Deputy Director (2009-2010) and then a Strategic Projects Coordinator (2011-2012) and through an application process that required a Head of School’s signature. Between 2008 and 2011, the scheme seconded a total of 24 academics as Teaching Fellows from 17 schools covering a range of disciplines and blended and flexible learning activities. Many Teaching Fellows went on to gain recognition for their skills and leadership capabilities by receiving awards or being appointed to formal leadership roles. Teaching Fellows were faculty scholars and, as such, engaged in situated leadership. As faculty scholars located within Schools, they had to manoeuvre through different approaches, expectations and support for innovation.

The Teaching Fellowship Scheme was established in 2008 through the leadership of one of the authors of this report, Professor Mike Keppell. It offers academics a chance to participate in an institute-led staff-development strategy centred on supporting faculty scholars to develop innovative solutions to identified curriculum problems. The Flexible Learning Institute (FLI) was responsible for the development and ongoing administration, organisation, mentoring and

support of Fellows. Since its establishment, some 24 Fellows representing 17 schools from across the four faculties of CSU have participated in the scheme.

The Scheme provided \$40 000 for 12 months or occasionally \$20 000 for six months to buy out 50 per cent of a Teaching Fellow's teaching time. This time has provided the "space" needed to enable Fellows to step back from their day-to-day activities and critically reflect on their practice (Keppell et al., 2010), overcoming what Taylor (1994) referred to as the "tyranny of proximity". One Fellow (F2; 2008) noted:

*This has been the value of the FLI Fellowship for me - resources, time and headspace to actually be brave to try something new.*

The option of funding a 100 per cent buyout of teaching time for one semester was debated. However, the increased difficulties faced by Schools and Faculties in replacing quality teaching academics was seen as problematic. In addition, the continued collegial engagement promoted by the 50 per cent buyout was seen as important and intended to promote collaboration between the Fellows, FLI, schools and faculties. The ongoing (although reduced) teaching role was also seen to provide an opportunity for situated learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991) where Fellows could simultaneously call upon their Fellowship activities to enhance their teaching and, at the same time, have their Fellowship informed by their teaching practice. It was also felt that a continuing engagement in teaching throughout the period of the fellowship might provide enhanced professional practice in relation to learning and teaching (Keppell et al, 2010). This allowed time for reflection and transformative learning to occur.

The FLI sought to use the Fellowship Scheme to influence the CSU community more broadly in 2011 through creating an increased focus on the activities of Fellows. This was prompted by the introduction of CSU's new curriculum renewal framework, the CSU Degree Initiative (CSUDI), which calls for course teams to address a range of criteria including Blended and Flexible Learning. Accordingly, Fellows featured in a DVD, individual digital case studies and videos related to BFL and published through the FLIMedia You Tube account (See Attachment Appendix E). These digital resources provided real examples of BFL practice and highlight some of the benefits, challenges and realities of successfully implementing blended and flexible learning strategies (Keppell et al., 2010;a, Keppell, Childs, Hay, Taffe & Webb et al., 2011a).

#### **What did the TFS case study help us to understand about learning leadership?**

The TFS case study highlighted two critical points in relation to leadership. Firstly, how one defines leadership is important, for, as noted by (Stogdill, 1974, p. 258), "there are almost as many definitions of leadership as there are persons who have attempted to define the concept". The traditional model of academic leadership has often been characterised by: individual academic achievement, such as publications in refereed journals or presentations; authorship of significant scholarly works; and, to some degree, a responsibility for the academic development of others through such practices as research student supervision. However, this model is increasingly criticised in the changing Higher Education environment (Rowley, 1997). Thus, how one sees or defines leadership and, specifically, academic leadership, will affect the way one perceives the TFS and its ability to foster such leadership. Secondly, the self-selecting

characteristic of the TFS may be important in determining the success of leadership capacity development. In relation to this case study, “connections, collegiality and networks” has been interpreted as having a collective meaning related to generating conversations about blended and flexible learning within the CSU community, building relationships and networks that work to support the Scheme and the activities of the Fellows. Learning Leadership in the context of the TFS context can be understood to be:

- 1     **A strategy where the TFS provides the time and space to implement and reflect; an iterative process of learning for those involved.**
- 2     **A bottom up strategy supported by senior management and aligned with CSU strategic directions sees the strategy supported across many levels of the institution.**
- 3     **The fostering of a community of practice, through relationships with EDs, FLI staff, Fellows and others, that encourages innovative research and practice in BFL.**
- 4     **Fellows demonstrating a willingness to collaborate, support and share practice.**
- 5     **The TFS providing opportunities for the development of skills and expertise that is recognised and accessed by peers.**
- 6     **The TFS supporting Fellows to have the confidence to take risks and experiment with something new.**
- 7     **Fellows demonstrating a willingness to engage in external activities and relationships, nationally and internationally.**

Learning leadership was fostered through distributive and delegated leadership, networked learning, faculty scholarship and, in some cases, diffusion of innovation.

#### **4. Streaming down from the top: implementing a new learning management system in a College of Business – Massey**

##### *Case study summary*

The College of Business is Massey University’s (MU) largest College with more than 10 000 students located across four campuses; Albany, Manawatu, Wellington and Distance. The adoption of MU’s new Learning Management System (aka Stream) in the College of Business was part of a university-wide project with a budget of NZ\$4.5 million that was approved by

the Senior Leadership Team including the relevant Pro-Vice Chancellor. While the project to implement Stream adopted a staged approach over three years, the eight-core first year papers comprising the Bachelor of Business Studies (BBS) were required to move from WebCT to Stream by the start of the first semester in 2009.

In 2008, the BBS Programme had undergone redesign as part of the AACSB accreditation process. In this context, the accreditation process provided a catalyst for greater constructive alignment between assessment, learning outcomes and the graduate profile. Notably, the graduate attributes of the programme were also revised to recognise the importance of producing graduates with sufficient digital literacy for today's business environment. Thus, the implementation of Stream occurred in the foundation year of a degree programme with a certain level of "readiness" for new ways of teaching, learning and assessment.

Given the timeframe for implementing Stream in the eight first year papers (units) was less than four months, academics teaching in the programme experienced significant pressure. In turn, this created pressure on centralised support services who worked above and beyond expectations to ensure the implementation of Stream was successful. In the wider context of the College and University at large, from a reputation and change management perspective, it was crucial that staff and students had a positive experience of Stream.

Despite variations in course design and differing levels of staff engagement, a high level of student satisfaction (85 per cent) was reported from initial survey data collected in September 2009. Subsequent surveys and evaluations of teaching report similar patterns with consistently over 80 per cent of students rating their experience of Stream as "good" or "very good". There is also evidence of enhanced retention and completion rates for some first year papers (units), especially for distance students where, in a few cases, they are now higher than for internal students.

#### **What did the Stream in Business case study help us to understand about learning leadership?**

Arguably, the "top-down" decision to implement Stream in the College of Business over a short timeframe achieved more than would have been possible following a more organic approach relying on the readiness and willingness of individual staff. As such, the case illustrates that a major institutional change can be achieved when there is alignment between high-level institutional goals and senior positional leadership. In this case Massey University was serious about using Stream as a platform for exploiting the potential of new digital media and the Pro-Vice Chancellor interpreted this as an opportunity to build on a number of other transformations linked to the process of securing AACSB<sup>5</sup> accreditation. Put simply, implementation of Stream over the initial implementation phase could not have been successfully achieved in the timeline without the leadership of the Pro-Vice Chancellor as a strategic advocate.

Having said that, the success of the initiative would have been seriously jeopardised had it not been for the key role of the Programme Coordinator and a handful of other opinion leaders who, through their vertical and horizontal networks, helped to mediate the "top down" message. In this respect, the role of the Coordinator of the first year BBS Program needs to be understood in terms of a situational mix of activity-oriented, position-oriented, task-oriented and relationship-

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<sup>5</sup> The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB)



oriented leadership. This observation supports Fiedler's widely cited contingency model, which is based on the concept of "situational contingency" (Strube & Garcia, 1981) that recognises all leadership is inherently contextual.

Finally, despite efforts to mediate the message and make digestible the implementation of Stream at the grass-root level, the Pro-Vice Chancellor's positional leadership and strong task-oriented focus, did not secure the support of all staff. Although this point is not surprising given the nature of a challenging senior leadership role, the experience of "streaming down from the top" needs to be understood in the "bigger picture" of wider structural changes and institutional reforms. On reflection, although filtered through the lens of one of the author's central role in leading the initiative, the overarching lesson from the case study is that the people delivering the message or the proposed innovation are just as important as the message or proposed innovation itself. This observation raises interesting questions about the interactions between Leadership (different theories), Leaders (different people and styles) and Leading (the effect of a leader's leadership) in the context of learning leadership in online, blended and distance education.

In summary, leadership and strategic change requires leaders. The case study showed that micro leaders emerge and are vital at different levels within an institution, especially in situations where change is directed from the top. More to the point, change agents and opinion leaders working in the academic heartland and who are widely respected by peers, play a crucial role in the diffusion of innovation. In this respect, learning leadership goes well beyond those in positions of formal responsibility and has more to do with influence and the types of networks and relationships leaders establish with colleagues. The ability of micro leaders to affect change is also contingent on the readiness of the organisational sub culture.

## **5. Swimming upstream, micro-level redesign in uncharted waters - Stream in the Social Sciences – Massey**

### *Case study summary*

This case study reports the experience of program renewal and curriculum leadership in an undergraduate degree major in the area of Social Sciences. It describes how the implementation of a new Learning Management System (Stream) at Massey University (MU) was used by a small group of staff as an opportunity to redesign the content and structure of a specific major in the Bachelor of Arts (BA) program. Notably, the concept of readiness is important, as the program in question was ready for redevelopment; at the time of the initiative it was under some pressure to attract and retain sufficient numbers of students. Moreover, the curriculum needed to be updated to more effectively and efficiently support teaching across different delivery modes and through multi-campus offerings. Although the case study is written from the knowledge and perspective of those leading the initiative at a university-wide level, the academic staff involved, not widely known as being early adopters of new technology, were highly motivated and task-oriented to revitalise their curriculum through the use of Stream and related new digital technologies. Overall the initiative provides an example of a "bottom-up" or more organically driven approach to curriculum renewal - albeit on a relatively small scale.

Within the wider context of Academic Reform and the University's strategic plan, the intention was to revitalise the undergraduate major to provide a more engaging and future-focused curriculum. Such a curriculum would in turn help to attract higher numbers of students and thereby ensure the longer-term viability of the program. It was seen that Stream could be the platform through which this could become possible, especially given the potential to maximise multi-campus staff resources, communication and collaboration via the online architecture. In particular, the goal was to transition from printed to digital study resources in line with, and in many respects ahead of, the wider university strategy. As a relatively small initiative targeting just one paper (unit) in the first instance, but with the aim of adopting a consistent "look and feel" across the entire discipline major, the case study had the potential to become a valuable "beacon project" to exemplify the implementation of Stream for other programs and academic units at MU.

A full-time project manager who reported to a Project Board in keeping with Prince 2 project methodology managed the implementation of Stream. Several working groups were established under the Project Board with responsibility for leading different dimensions of the project, including a College Development Working Group. The role of this Working Group was to help prioritise, coordinate and monitor the implementation of Stream within colleges and academic units. More specifically the intention was to work with colleges to develop an implementation plan that identified and allocated appropriate supports and professional development resources at the time and point of need. The local college initiative described in this case study was one of the first examples within the University where a small group of academic staff willingly volunteered to be early adopters in the implementation of Stream.

The key outcomes of the initiative included, first and foremost, the complete redesign of the original paper (unit) as a fully online course. Second, the staff-generated student survey indicated that around half of the students perceived that Stream improved their interactions with staff. Also, in terms of interactively with content, 60 per cent of students identified that the use of mini online presentations in Adobe Presenter was the most useful function within Stream. The extent to which digital delivery quickly became the new normal is evidenced by a 400 per cent increase by the following offering of the paper (unit) in the number of electronic assignment submissions.

#### **What did the Stream in the Social Sciences case study help us to understand about learning leadership?**

A standout feature of this project was the "bottom up" nature of the innovation and the level of collaboration that occurred between staff. In this regard, the case study illustrates the importance of relationship-oriented leadership, as the success of this project was highly dependent on pre-existing collegiality that existed between the major actors. An extension of this collegiality and networking was the strong relationship established with the Flexible Learning and Teaching Consultant who made a significant contribution throughout each stage of the innovation. The case study also shows the importance of enabling micro leaders; they can create interest, enthusiasm and unparalleled momentum for an innovation at a local level. This is especially the case in a university environment where academics are known to value their autonomy. In a similar vein, it shows the influence that opinion leaders can have in generating support and steering the direction of an innovation, especially when they have a degree of local positional leadership (but not line management) linked to their role in coordinating an academic program.



That said, the program renewal initiative and innovative use of new digital technology described in this case study was also highly task- and activity-oriented, as there were strong drivers to transform the conventional model of teaching and learning to support students distributed across campuses and delivery modes. In many respects, the shared goal of achieving an outcome that would address the challenges facing this program helped to maintain focus, ensured steady progress and contributed to a high level of cohesion among staff. It follows that the initial success of this program renewal effort was influenced by a complex ecology of highly situated interrelations, which potentially limits the transferability of the specific technology and pedagogical solutions to other contexts. Having said that, the overarching lesson is that many of the innovative outcomes would not have been possible through more conventional “top down” approaches to institutional leadership. In other words, the creative space available for local innovation and local approaches to leadership, in all its forms, was crucial to enabling the adoption of Stream in a transformative manner.

Finally, the organic and localised nature of the innovation was also a weakness in terms of its wider impact. Although the initiative was able to flourish because the micro nature of the project was largely under the radar of the organisational bureaucracy and the scale of development was relatively small in terms of the much larger Stream Project, to some extent it remained an “island of innovation”, especially from those in more senior roles of positional leadership. Thus, in swimming upstream to explore relatively uncharted waters, relatively little would have been learned from the experience, beyond by those involved, without the middle-out support and the informal linkages established to people with responsibility for fostering institution-wide innovation.

## **6. The nexus between space, time, teaching and learning.**

### **Dr John Rafferty, Murray School of Education – CSU**

#### *Case study summary*

Dr Rafferty has a strong interest in the environment, sustainability and education. A lecturer at the School of Education’s Albury-Wodonga campus, in 2011 Dr Rafferty was successful in gaining a FLI Teaching Fellowship with his project titled “Campus Learning: exploring the nexus between space, time, teaching and learning”. Dr Rafferty’s research currently focuses on school reform and change, and he has found himself increasingly drawn into the area of environmental education and teaching in natural spaces. This research focus has opened up a “Pandora’s box” regarding spaces, particularly about where students actually learn and the importance of informal learning environments.

Dr Rafferty’s Fellowship built on the Carrick Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education’s 2007 project “Places and Spaces For Learning Seminars” and the ALTC funded project “Spaces for Knowledge Generation” by Souter, Riddle, Sellers and Keppel (2011). CSU’s Albury-Wodonga campus was developed in an environmentally sensitive manner with the aim of providing educational value and being aesthetically pleasing. Particular emphasis has been placed on passive energy design, low cost maintenance and water management as well as the progressive ecological rehabilitation of the campus (Harrison & Mitchell, 2001). So, in addition to establishing a traditional physical setting, it was intended that “the buildings [would] also provide a dynamic model for sustainable living and unique opportunities for community and

student engagement” (Rafferty, 2011, p. 53). Over several years and with support from the Murray School of Education, the Faculty of Education and the Division of Facilities Management, Dr Rafferty was able to identify and develop numerous informal learning environments and spaces on the campus. However, the learning spaces were largely underused, meaning that students and teachers had not actively engaged with all the learning opportunities that the campus provided. This project aimed to promote the value and use of such learning spaces as well as improve approaches to blended and flexible teaching and learning.

Through mentoring, acting as the “knowledgeable other”, and guiding staff in the development of learning experiences and learning spaces, Dr Rafferty sought to prompt educators to question and challenge their pedagogical practices. Conducted over two sessions, the first involved working with five academics located on the Albury-Wodonga Campus, whilst the second saw the five academics involved sourced from across four different campuses. While such practices promote the use of learning space, it was also hoped that they would stimulate further discussion and understanding of the nexus between time space and pedagogy. This would then assist in developing a “sandbox” environment for academics to improve students’ learning experiences through adopting greater flexibility in time, pace, place, mode of study, teaching approach and forms of assessment in the design and delivery of learning experiences.<sup>6</sup> The interactive tools and artefacts developed as a result of this collaboration aimed to support tertiary educators in challenging and reflecting upon their current teaching practices as well as supporting their use of learning spaces.

The inclusion of the student voice through a series of focus groups that reflected upon their learning spaces and experiences aimed to provide greater insight into the continuing provision of leading edge flexible learning and teaching. It also gave students a chance to reflect upon the way that their own personal learning environment (PLE) is constructed and the various factors that enhance or impact upon their individual learning experiences.

#### **What did Dr Rafferty’s case study help us to understand about learning leadership?**

Dr Rafferty described his role in his Fellowship Project as being like that of a “critical friend” or “knowledgeable other”. An important aspect of this approach to change was being able to take the back seat and just listen to what people were doing and what they hoped to achieve. This then provided a base to start discussions and offer a range of suggestions about other things they could do to improve their teaching practice. Through this interaction, academics also gained the confidence to think outside traditional expectations of time and space, and re-examine their own practice (J. Rafferty in FLIMedia, 2011). However, Dr Rafferty emphasised the fact that every person he had worked with was an “Educational Leader” and that he was not leading them, put rather acting as a “teaching provocationist” or “echo wall” (J. Rafferty, personal communication, November 23, 2011). Dr Rafferty felt that, while his Fellowship may have put him in a key position where he could bring things together, he didn’t see it as having put him in front as a leader.

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<sup>6</sup> Defined in the following way in the BFL Standards (Keppell, 2011): “Flexible learning provides opportunities to improve the student experience through flexibility in time, pace, place (physical, virtual, on-campus, off-campus), mode of study (print-based, face-to-face, blended, online, mobile), teaching approach (collaborative, independent), forms of assessment and staffing. It may utilise a wide range of media, environments, learning spaces and technologies for learning and teaching.” (Keppell, 2011).

However, Dr Rafferty did note that, in respect to publicising the activities associated with the Fellowship, he did have a chance to lead, because those he had worked with were very new academics and had less experience in that area. In addition, there appeared to be many similarities between Dr Rafferty's approach and key elements of learning-directed leadership, as proposed by Kayes and Kayes (2011). In particular, Dr Rafferty's approach appeared to align with four of the six elements: learning from experience, developing higher order learning, building resilience and nurturing trust (Kayes & Kayes, 2011, p. 8).

Learning leadership in the Rafferty case study was fostered through faculty scholarship and networked learning.

## **7. Shifting to student-centred facilitation of learning through professional development initiatives. Brad Edlington, School of Policing – CSU**

### *Case study summary*

While having held a variety of roles in police education, such as educational consultant and e-learning manager, at the time of his 2011 Teaching Fellowship, Mr Edlington worked in designing, developing and implementing student-centred approaches within the Associate Degree of Policing Practice (ADPP). At this time, Mr Edlington was the presiding officer on the SOPS Learning & Teaching Committee and a member of the CSU SOPS/NSW Police Teaching Development Advisory Committee (TDAC) as well as the School of Policing Studies' Facilitator Development Program Implementation Team.

Mr Edlington was successful in applying for a Teaching Fellowship with the Flexible Learning Institute for his project titled "Shifting to student-centred facilitation of learning: development of blended professional development initiatives for police educators within a student problem-based learning (PBL) environment". This Fellowship sought to assist in the sustained implementation of student-centred learning approaches, as opposed to teacher-centred learning approaches, within the ADPP. Through developing an e-learning module that would demonstrate good practice in PBL, provide staff with a variety of resources and, in addition, encourage staff to reflect upon their own practice, this project aimed to contribute to a change in culture and practice at the School.

Charles Sturt University (CSU) works in partnership with the NSW Police Force to provide police recruit training and is working to improve the ability of probationary constables to apply in practice what they learn through the implementation of a student-centred learning approach within the ADPP. The use of PBL in policing education has become quite notable within Australian and North American settings, with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police having provided one of the most recognised examples. It has been demonstrated that adopting a student-centred or PBL focus can help students demonstrate better problem solving abilities (Savery, 2006) and consequently improve the ability of probationary constables to make better decisions and apply their knowledge in the field. Despite this support for student-centred approaches to police training, implementation remained problematic.

By its very nature, PBL and student-centred approaches require staff to facilitate learning rather than adopting the role of teacher. Affecting this shift proved challenging with academics consciously and unconsciously being encouraged to regress to more traditional approaches to teaching. This notion of “reverting to type” was particularly pertinent within the police education setting “where the type to which police educators most readily revert in the classroom relates closely to their sense of occupational identity where exerting control, gaining compliance and giving direction becomes second nature” (B. Edlington, 2010 , p.2). While these responses may have been core abilities within effective operational policing, they were not supportive of student centred learning and represented key challenges to the successful change required to educational approaches within the School. Consequently, Mr Edlington identified that a key determinant for success was creating and implementing effective academic staff development strategies to assist staff in making the complex conceptual shift required to move from a teacher-centred approach to a student-centred approach (Kember, 1997).

This context provided the impetus for Mr Edlington’s Fellowship Project to design and produce an online product containing a number of interactive digital learning objects. The process of involving staff in the capture of digital footage required them to reflect more deeply on their own practice than they would otherwise have to. Explaining their thoughts and reflections on student-centred practice and key experiences to others via video resulted in improved understandings of self and one’s own practice. This incidental learning and generation of positive change became a strategy to support the multi-dimensional change required. In addition, receiving the Teaching Fellowship proved a key factor in legitimising the implementation of student-centred practice and the key objectives of those involved.

#### **What did Mr Edlington’s case study help us to understand about learning leadership?**

Mr Edlington adopted a situational leadership style whereby he moderated his leadership style depending on the development stage or “readiness” of fellow colleagues to bring about change (Hersey & Blanchard, 1977). He noted: “I think it’s sort of monitoring, being able to monitor how things are changing and progressing and respond accordingly ... ” (B. Edlington, personal communication, August 23, 2011). Although legitimised to some degree through receiving a Teaching Fellowship, Mr Edlington affected this change through an informal style of leadership, adopting a participatory approach built upon raising awareness and engagement, promoting reflection and leading by example to bring others on board. Throughout this process, he recognised and fostered the potential of other staff, acknowledging that everyone has a role to play in bringing about change and that everyone has essential skills to bring to the table. Mr Edlington’s connection map illuminated the extensive nature of human connections that underpin authentic problem solving through a Teaching Fellowship. View Mr Edlington’s case study webfolio to access his impact map and the connection map developed as part of this case study.

Learning leadership in the Edlington case study was fostered through faculty scholarship and networked learning.

## 8. Course conversations as learning leadership. The case of the blended and flexible learning Course Team Symposiums - CSU

### *Case study summary*

In 2010 the Flexible Learning Institute (FLI) introduced Course Team Symposiums to fund course teams to come together to engage with blended and flexible learning design and to help address the substantial curriculum renewal required as a consequence of the implementation of a strategy known as the *CSU Degree initiative*. This initiative created a curriculum framework for the renewal of undergraduate degrees at CSU. Through providing funding, planning, resources and strategic support, the FLI saw the symposiums as a way to provide both an incentive and support for whole course teams to come together and engage with issues related to blended and flexible learning in their own course context and, in doing so, address the drivers of wider engagement and support for the CSU Degree Initiative. Grant applicants typically included a course team, Educational designer and a Course Director (CD).

During 2011-2012, grant recipients were awarded \$2000 each to develop a blended and flexible learning course strategy that indicated how blended and flexible learning would be embedded into the student experience across the course. Teams would engage in a variety of activities during the symposiums, with the stage of team development and degree of thinking about course design (particularly relating to blended and flexible learning) significant determinants of the nature of those activities. Ultimately, the aim was for each team to analyse how they currently use blended and flexible learning and the kinds of issues they are facing, then work through a vision for their optimal blended and flexible learning and teaching experience, then collaboratively develop a blended and flexible learning course plan or strategy. As part of the strategy implementation, examples of blended and flexible learning design would be developed that could then be shared with other course teams within the CSU community.

Preference for awarding the Grant was given to applicants who could demonstrate that a risk assessment has been carried out in relationship to the course. The development of a course level plan involving blended and flexible learning is a course strategy designed to respond to that risk assessment. For example, a need may have been identified to re-design the course to: respond to student feedback; address problems with retention; gain market share; or respond to developments in the field. Joint applications between a number of course teams, including cross-Faculty teams, were favourably considered for one grant, given the support of the relevant Head of Schools. Applications were considered for synchronous and/or asynchronous and innovative proposals for Course Team Symposiums.

Initial targets aimed to fund ten symposiums in 2011, however the first round of offers resulted in only three symposiums being granted. An additional round of offers occurred in late 2011, resulting in nine additional symposiums being funded, exceeding the original targets and involving 21 separate courses in 12 symposiums. While no targets were set for the number of course symposiums per Faculty, it was generally agreed that the approval process should ensure that grant recipients represented all Faculties in relatively equal numbers. With the exception of the Faculty of Business, which was only granted one of the 12 symposiums, this has been the case. Six of the symposiums were held during 2011, with the remainder occurring in 2012. An additional round of offers will take place in 2012.



During 2011, the Course Team Symposiums were progressively reviewed and refined, both conceptually and operationally. For example, when first conceptualised, the resources and guidance offered to course teams was in the form of a series of guiding principles and perspectives (See Appendix D, BFL wiki). The need to operationalise these principles with actual working teams resulted in the creation of a wiki, a DVD, and a FLIMedia You Tube Channel documenting how others were using blended and flexible learning in their own teaching. In addition, the positive responses being received and the limited funding for symposiums available, has seen the Strategic Projects Coordinator begin working with the Curriculum Renewal Group within Learning and Teaching Services (LTS) to develop a Do-It-Yourself Course Symposium for those who are unable to gain funding. Through these changes, it was hoped that the impact of the course symposiums would be both broader and deeper in 2012, while maintaining the same core goals that existed at its inception in 2010.

#### **What did the Course Team Symposium case study help us to understand about learning leadership?**

The course team symposiums were designed to delegate leadership to a course team and to foster proximal development of the team to enhance its ability to collaboratively develop a blended and flexible learning strategy with the support of an FLI facilitator and an Educational Designer. Learning leadership was situated, problem posing and authentic. Participants were given the time, space and support needed to build an understanding of the course needs, garner ideas about blended and flexible learning and make decisions to improve the quality of the student experience of the course in line with the strategic intent of the institution as interpreted through the FLI, the disciplinary and professional contents of the course and the interests of the course team members.

One participant felt that he had an obligation to take on the principle leadership role as others in his team had to divide their attention between teaching and research. Another course leader (CD3) preferred to “lead from behind” while the third (CD2) felt that while he was responsible for the courses, he didn’t feel he, personally, needed to provide “the whole leadership package” and felt comfortable sharing that leadership with others in the team who may have specific learning expertise. He felt that, as the CSUDegree was asking academics to make dramatic changes, the first part of his role was to create a comfortable environment where that might happen. Once that was in place, he needed to help the team identify imbalances and offer opportunities for change.

However, the Course Team Symposiums had only been initiated six months before this study, and were early in development. While there are early indications that there may have been some impact on the development of Course Directors and Educational Designers as learning leaders, the sample size and the fact that only the leaders themselves were questioned means that little can be drawn from these findings and further research needs to be conducted. Similarly, while there is some evidence that the symposiums are being successful in developing the Course Directors’/Educational Designers’ own understandings of BFL, the limitations of the study make these observations tentative and inconclusive. The nature of the symposiums themselves is designed to foster connections, collegiality and networks. However, there’s little evidence at this stage that the symposiums have enhanced connections beyond the course team.

Learning leadership in the Course Team Symposium case study was fostered largely through distributive and delegated leadership, collective faculty scholarship and networked learning. Some course teams may also have been influenced through diffusion of innovation.

## Discussion of case study foci

The following section considers, in brief, three foci of the case studies:

1. **Connections, collegiality and networks**
2. **Reflective practice and practice experimentation**
3. **Reflections on learning leadership**

### 1. Connections, collegiality and networks

The extensive and comprehensive nature of connections and networks identified within a number of case studies was illustrated in Chapter 2. The case studies indicated that fostering: connections, peer learning, learning networks, strategic networks and professional networks were integral to the social processes of innovation. So too were being members of a variety of “teams” such as subject teams, course teams, discipline teams and presentation teams.

Some connections were utilitarian; finding and utilising staff to solve an immediate technology issue. Other connections were deeper and more sustained; through the development of scholarship or enquiry, or an informal community of practice.

**For example:**

*Connections [in the TFS] were fostered through hosting 59min@FLI, a four weekly interactive webinar that involved Fellows - both past and present - as well as the wider CSU community. They engaged in discussions about their projects and project-related activities. In addition, communication was fostered through meetings using a range of social media and web communications such as Bridgit (a CSU desk-top sharing tool), Twitter, Delicious and Skype. Presentations and publications at international, national and internal conferences was also encouraged. FLI also held social functions that brought together past and present Fellows along with other FLI community in an informal setting.*

Networked learning was critical to the success of many of the strategies and activities. Without networked learning, new approaches lacked impact if they were restricted to the work of isolated academics working individually to solve idiosyncratic subject- (paper-) based problems. Both MU and CSU saw the value of engaging academics beyond their own potentially isolated learning and teaching concerns.

**For example:**

*In the case of the Course Team Symposiums (CSU), the idea of networked learning was strongly framed and underpinned, with the view that course level problems needed to be approached collectively through a course team. A/Professor Childs described the importance*



of collaboration in an AudioBoo (Childs, October 2011) by noting that the vision for the Course Team Symposium Grants was “to bring people together ... (and) give them time to talk about broad strategies at course level for blended and flexible learning”. The Symposium Grants required the support of a Head of School and Course Director, and funded the physical “coming together” of subject specialists who may otherwise have never met to discuss a course or where their subject fit within the student’s experience.

The CSUEDs provided the CSU community with an increasingly popular opportunity for collaboration. In 2008, 25 papers/workshops were presented by at least two presenters (35 per cent of the total papers) and six papers/workshops were presented by more than three presenters (or 8 per cent of the total). By 2010, collaborative papers/workshops with two presenters or more had grown to 57 (61 per cent of the total) and with more than three presenters, had grown to between 30 and 32 per cent of the total. In summary, the total number of presentations with more than three presenters grew from 8 per cent in 2008 to 32 per cent in 2010. Peer learning was also critical to the TFS and to the “viral PD” approach adopted by the ePortfolio team.

The connections were often complex. The *Streaming Down* case study (MU) captures this well by identifying the ways in which a strategy operated at multiple levels of the institution. It is copied in full here to provide an exemplar of this point:

First and foremost, [the *Streaming Down* case study] is testament to the scale of what can be achieved when institutional strategy and the positional leadership of senior staff is leveraged. In particular, the success of this project depended on the relationship that was established between the Project Manager, Director of Distance Education, Pro-Vice Chancellor and other important opinion leaders. This high-level communication channel was essential in helping to resolve problems and issues throughout the project but should not overshadow the important role that the Coordinator of the first year BBS Programme played as a positional, relational and activity-orientated leader.

At a meso level, an important collegial network emerged between the BBS Coordinator, heads of academic units and the Coordinator of the Flexible Teaching & Learning Consultants. All of these people and groups interfaced at different times with the positional leaders who had formal responsibility for the implementation of Stream. Thus, the connection between and across these two levels was crucial, but ultimately very little would have been achieved without this dialogue extending to those who actually had to do the work.

At a micro level there is evidence of new connections forming between individual paper (unit) level coordinators across different departments and disciplines, brokered by the BBS Coordinator. The Staff Survey of June 2010 affirmed a strong sense of collegiality among academic staff whose reciprocal support was of great value. Respondents’ qualitative comments acknowledged colleagues who, having already implemented Stream themselves, were approachable and readily available as a key point of support. Finally, the Flexible Teaching & Learning Consultants were also a key resource for staff. The same survey indicated that the supportive

role of the Consultants was an imperative during the implementation phase, with 71 per cent of respondents agreeing with the statement, “I was well supported by central university services”.

## 2. Reflective practice and practice experimentation

“Reflective practice” was considered differently in each of the case studies, and reflected the development of case studies at the macro, meso and micro levels. For example, at the meso and micro levels the TFS, Faculty Scholars (individual Fellows) and the CSUEDs considered reflective practice as connected to reflection through practice, showcase and exemplars and, in some cases, through publications. Authentic learning was critical to this concern and scholarship was incorporated within authentic professional learning activities and learning design. Practice experimentation was tied to authentic problems solving largely at the meso and micro levels of the organisation and was central to interpreting strategic institutional directions through innovation of high relevance to local contexts. Strategic intent typically formed an iterative process with local problem solving, quality learning and teaching processes and the idiosyncratic, collective and situated interests of those involved.

For example, the TFS encouraged Fellows to engage in mentoring activities and reflective conversations with FLI staff and other Fellows. Use of reflective journals, participation and presentation of project information and progress at *59mins@FLI* (a monthly technology-enabled workshop) or other events such as CSUED, production of individual case study videos of the Teaching Fellows and their projects and a DVD entitled *The Practitioner’s Voice* (FLI Media, 2011) encouraged Fellows to reflect upon their Fellowships as they were called to articulate their experiences and thoughts to the broad CSU community. Having this time to reflect while maintaining a teaching role, although in a reduced capacity, was seen as highly valuable in providing an opportunity for situated learning to occur. Fellows were able to simultaneously call upon their Fellowship activities and findings to enhance their teaching and, at the same time, have their Fellowship informed by their teaching practice as well as their scholarly outcomes published in peer reviewed journals and books (see many, TFS case study).

Reflective practice was also considered to be an integrated institutional activity. The Stream @ Massey case studies noted that reflection on the implementation of Stream has occurred at a number of levels. Institutionally, MU has continued to gather and monitor data on the use of Stream and findings have been consolidated in a number of reports that have been widely shared with staff and senior university leadership. For example, a small research team analysed the results of the Student Survey of September 2009 (Milne, Brown, Charbonneau & Macpherson, 2010) and the BBS Coordinator was the lead author of a report on the Staff Survey of June 2010 (Walker, Brown, Moore & Hughes, 2011a). Both reports were shared with the Pro-Vice Chancellor and College Executive, and were circulated to all staff within the College of Business. They were also tabled and discussed at the University’s Teaching and Learning Committee. A case study based on these reports has also been published as a conference paper at the ASCILITE conference in Hobart, December 2011 (Walker, Brown, Moore & Hughes, 2011b). Several individual staff members have given presentations on their use of Stream, including sessions at the annual Vice-Chancellor’s Symposium (November, 2009) and during Teaching and Learning Week (September, 2010). The Stream experience has also been shared through conference papers to relevant professional communities in the UK and US, including an overview of the initiative by the Pro-Vice Chancellor during the AACSB conference (e.g., Brown & Walker, 2011).

### 3. Reflections on learning leadership

Chapter 1 summarised the reason for the use of the term “learning leadership”; although the term is borrowed from Scott et al. (2008), it does not refer to “leaders” or to those in roles of authority when used in this report. The strategies explored in this report were directed from above through delegated leadership, but manifested in opportunities for pockets of learning-oriented, learning-driven and activity-driven change through innovation in BFL and DE. The researchers did not ascribe the capacity to see the necessity of change to those in roles of authority. Rather, it became clear from the research that the capacity for “leadership” was widely located across each institution, in every area occupied by staff - any of whom may have, at different times and for varying reasons, displayed learning leadership. The research indicated that learning leadership sat within and was part of disorderly change processes, and that it was connected and multi-directional and not owned nor inhabited by any one person or role. This report, therefore, uses the term “learning leadership” as a collective noun - an organisational “hum” (after Childs op cited, p. 49) made possible through the sum total of strategies and activities and connected actions of individuals and groups.

On reflection, the case studies helped the researchers understand that “top down” leadership could be leveraged and directional; as could “bottom up” leadership. Institutional strategies were interpreted and diffused through delegated change processes laterally and horizontally. Strategies and activities emerged in direct response to the delegated processes or sprung up as spot fires through viral uptake. This “top down” leadership was sometimes lineal, even if the subsequent interpretations were not. “Top down” leadership was important for fostering learning leadership in the case studies. The Massey’s case study *Streaming Upwards* highlighted the importance of enabling micro leaders as they can create interest, enthusiasm and unparalleled momentum for an innovation at a local level. This insight can also be drawn from the CSU cases - academics in both university environments are known to value their autonomy.

On reflection, the term “learning leadership” remained contested. For example, the *ePortfolio* case study indicated a general reluctance to use the term “leadership” regardless of associated meanings. This appeared to stem from a desire by informants for a less formal, more equal power relationship, a desire to influence rather than be responsible for outcomes and a discord between the perceived uncertainties associated with learning and the definite knowledge which seemed to be expected of leaders. We speculate that this reflection has relevance for the study more generally, although further research is needed. This touches on a critical point raised by the *Swimming Upstream* case study that pertains to the organic and localised nature of the innovation that was a weakness in terms of its wider impact. The case study noted that:

*Although the initiative was able to flourish as the micro nature of the project was largely under the radar of organisational bureaucracy, and the scale of development was relatively small in terms of the much larger Stream Project, to some extent it remained an “island of innovation”, especially from those in more senior roles of positional leadership. Thus, in swimming upstream to explore relatively uncharted waters relatively little would have been learned from the experience beyond those involved without middle out support and informal linkages established to people with responsibility for fostering institution-wide innovation.*

Also, on reflection, “learning leadership” that is small, localised and organic but disconnected to the centre may reflect professional and authentic learning, but in terms of learning leadership may be prescribed to local interests. As this study was related to institutional strategies, a high chance existed that alignment would be present, so, to this degree, the study had an element of the “self fulfilling prophecy”. Each case study was written by authors who had been close to the strategy or activity and who were positively aligned with the story they were telling from existing data. This is neither good nor bad, simply a comment on the nature of the subjectivities at play. The connections between micro innovation and macro level change were confirmed, although the nature of those connections need further study to understand alignment.

However, the researchers found that the connections between macro, meso and micro strategies had not been mapped nor managed consistently over time. Although there was—more or less—a clear picture of each strategy and activity, the collective whole was less clear. For example, it is known that Teaching Fellows presented at CSUEDs; connections existed between Course Team Symposiums and other learning and teaching strategies, (such as Course Director’s Forums and School Retreats) and that the activities undertaken through the introduction of the ePortfolio connected to a wide range of learning design activities at subject and course levels, and with the support of Education Designers. The density and complexity of the connections was hinted at in the activity level *connections maps* (See html-rich case studies <<http://learningleadershipstudy.wordpress.com/>>), but more needs to be understood about them at the strategy level. Understanding and leveraging these connections remains an important future task.

Finally, the data indicated that innovation was fostered through “the many” (individuals and groups), through opportunities to collaborate, support and share practice—some in “communities of practice”, some in localised groupings—and at various degrees of connection to the strategic intent of the respective institutions.

## Chapter 3 Findings

The following section considers the five insights that emerged from the case studies and the three foci discussed above in response to the research question. The study found that, in the contexts of the case studies developed at CSU and MU:

- 1 Innovation was enabled by the large and small actions of many people working individually and collectively in relationship to change.<sup>7</sup>**

The research found that the strategies and activities associated with fostering change in BFL and DE at CSU and MU involved many connected people involved in numerous tasks developed at different levels of granularity. Many strategies were initiated through delegated leadership; however both institutions placed strong value on capacity building, and the social processes associated with change and, typically, once leadership was delegated, a distributive approach was deployed. Sustainability of innovation was achieved through people's actions.

- 2 The large and small actions of many people working individually and collectively in relationship to change were fostered through a range of different operational models.**

As noted in Chapter 1, through the case studies, different models of leadership approaches were identified and included distributive leadership, delegated leadership, Faculty scholar model, networked learning and diffusion of innovation. Innovation was enabled through collaboration, networked professional learning, time allocated to innovation, sharing and supported experimentation rather than to any one approach to leadership development.

- 3 Innovation in the case studies was fostered through delegated leadership, distributive leadership model, faculty scholarship model, networked learning model and diffusion of innovation model.**

Different approaches had been adopted by the institutions to foster change and strategic alignment to the goals of the institution. Both institutions used a distributed approach to change management through delegated leadership. The way in which delegated leadership was interpreted by positional leaders was to encourage collaboration through distributive leadership, faculty scholarship, networked learning as well as planned and viral diffusion.

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<sup>7</sup> Moncrieff (1999, p.219).

**4 Innovation in BFL and DE was aligned to strategic institutional intent through the influence of staff within each institution.<sup>8</sup>**

The strategies identified in this research provided “time-out” for academics to develop or report their innovations in blended and flexible and distance education. Workloads and other resources had been allocated to support innovation that was aligned with the strategic intent of the institution. Alignment was also to the strategic interests of the staff involved, and their professional and, at times, socio-political commitments as tertiary educators and researchers. Alignment was not utilitarian but interpretative.

**5 “Innovating”, “influencing others”, “collaborating” and “sharing” had positive connotations.**

The case studies suggested that some staff did not use the term “leadership” or “learning leadership”, nor did they see themselves as “learning leaders” - while others did. This variability was not necessarily tied to role. Innovating and influencing others to: improve the student experience; to form a bridge between a profession or body of knowledge and teaching; and to solve an immediate learning and teaching problem to fulfil a bigger change agenda of personal interest all formed part of an academic or educational support staff’s professional business. Expanding opportunities for staff to innovate and share was highly valued. This finding gives “food for thought” in terms of future directions - how should the term “leadership” be used? Will capacity building associated with a “distributive leadership” framework necessarily foster innovation and creativity through activity?

The interconnections and computations related to the strategies and activities were complex and were to some degree represented via connections maps. However the scope of the study to fully map or understand the interconnections was limited. The following example of connections between the strategies and activities at CSU, for example, exemplify the connections:

*A condition of a Teaching Fellow’s contract is that they must present to a CSUED conference in the year of their Fellowship. They share their project as it develops with peers, using Pebblepad. Some may be part of a Course Team Symposium. If they are not, the Strategic Projects Coordinator is involved in both, and sharing takes place. Individual Teaching Fellows work with Educational Designers, and subject and course teams, and influence is generated outward and across all. Exemplars are developed through practice, and scholarly works are produced for internal and external consumption. Course Team Symposium teams also present at CSUEDs. The networks, impacts and connections are many and varied, and include individuals, groups of people, systems, resources and processes in a hum of innovation. (1:1 Interview, FLI Team Member, January 2012).*

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<sup>8</sup> However, as noted in the Executive Summary, the strategies reported herein were developed and implemented at the macro level of the institution and therefore a high degree of alignment would be expected.



## Three Key Lessons

As noted in Chapter 1, distributive leadership holds a significant place within this study, not as the sole descriptor of learning leadership observed but, nevertheless, a prominent one. Regardless of the leadership approach at the macro, meso and micro levels of the institution, innovation in blended and flexible learning and distance education can be fostered through:

- Establishing clear messages concerning what “good” practice might mean<sup>9</sup>
- Establishing efforts to better understand the institution as a network and to conceive of change as a networked strategy where collaboration is valued
- Creating opportunities for staff to innovate collaboratively
- Providing time release and support, including resources, educational designers and access to critical friends or mentors
- Strategising in response to staff who may be innovating in advance of institutional norms
- Communicating how the various strategies and activities funded from the centre reflect the core commitments of the institution

Three key lessons emerged from the study, and are offered here as principles to guide future strategy development:

### **1 Innovation needs to be aligned to institutional vision – and the institution needs to manage the tensions that can exist between alignment, creativity and innovation.**

The case studies were heavily situated within the strategic aspirations of the respective institutions and provided an opportunity to understand change at the strategy and activity levels. CSU and MU employees are institutional actors, recruited because they have something to offer the institution. Employees have their own agendas, knowledge domains, points of view, and disciplinary, professional and pedagogical orientations. In addition, not all institutional norms are visionary. At times, alignment to strategic intent runs counter to technological and pedagogical innovation. Some of the case studies indicated that stepping *outside* institutional norms, rather than aligning with institutional norms, was a key to leadership through innovation. In some cases, innovation occurred *because* strategic intent was disrupted and, at times, conservative norms were countered with creative approaches and “work-arounds”. Alignment to institutional norms, or to institutional vision, does not guarantee innovation. Indeed, it can stifle, marginalise or disable it through insufficient resources, workload, systems, positional leadership or difficult timelines.

### **2 Good practice in blended and flexible and distance education needs to be manifested through sustainable, consistent and supported opportunities.**

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<sup>9</sup> Bain (2011, p.959) discusses the notion of “simple rules” as a basis for designing an institution’s schema and commitments to practice. These ideas provide a useful starting point for further work in this area.



An *ipso facto* assumption existed in the study that the case studies were chosen because they represented good practice and had been funded for sustained periods of time. The case studies could be strengthened, however, by articulating more clearly *how* they demonstrate good practice strategies which are designed to improve the quality of BFL and DE aligned to the strategic direction of the university. There is also the question of who defines “what is good”? Defining “what is good?” without this being translated into check lists that prescribe innovation is a challenge at the micro level of change. Is it defined through hearing the hum of micro innovation, that is, work being done by staff beneath the radar? Is it defined from research about practice, Such as the synthesis of good practice identified by Keppell et al., 2011. Is it legitimised only if it emerges from those in positions of formal responsibility and power? Is definition the domain of the academy, or those outside the institution, such as Accreditation, Teaching Standards or Benchmarks?

More needs to be done to provide sustainable, consistent and supported opportunities to grow “good” in situated and connected ways. In some ways, the million dollar question exists herein: how does an entire institution shift to “good practice” in blended and flexible learning, and how does an institution know when sustainable, widespread and dynamic change has been achieved?

**3      Regardless of the strategy or activity, commitment to approaches that enable academics to take time, collaborate, share, network and connect are key to innovation in blended and flexible and distance education.**

The eight case studies were developed through the implementation phases of four institutional strategies. Each strategy was characteristically different in the sense that different models underpinned their operation. The study found that, while the approach or model adopted to foster innovation varied, the common values that underpinned them were critical. This study confirmed Devlin et al.’s (2012a, p. 2) conclusions, in their investigation into leading sustainable change in teaching and learning in Australian universities, that strategies and activities designed to foster innovation in blended and flexible learning and DE need to be collaborative and developmental, embedded, sustainable and ongoing, and focused on enabling innovation and enhancement.

Two recent ALTC reports are of interest in placing the findings of this study in a wider context. The first is a commissioned report completed by Keppell et al. (2011) that provided a synthesis of good practice in technology-enabled learning and teaching. The second by Devlin et al. (2012a) reported research that provided lessons from the sector re leading sustainable improvement in university teaching and learning.

Keppell et al. (2011b, p. 2) noted ten outcomes as critical to good practice in technology-enabled learning and teaching. Three of these outcomes speak directly to the issue of academic development:

- (1)      A focus on learning design allows academics to model and share good practice in learning and teaching**
- (2)      Successful academic development focuses on engaging academics over sustained periods of time through action learning cycles and the provision of leadership development opportunities**

## **(7) Knowledge and resource sharing are central to a vibrant community of practice**

The case studies indicated that a focus on learning design was evidenced in the Teaching Fellowship Scheme through the activities of the Teaching Fellows (CSU) and through the development of micro and meso level exemplars that were shared (MU). The CSUEDs provided an opportunity for CSU academics to share their learning and teaching endeavours, scholarship, and “learning design” with peers at some level of granularity was the focus of many presentations.

The study was not evaluative, so no comments can be made as to the success or otherwise of the approaches taken to academic development (Keppell et al., 2011b, Concept Map 3, p. 62), however, each of the strategies described in this study had been funded over a two- to five-year period. No evidence of an action learning cycle was identified. “The provision of leadership development opportunities” noted in concept map 3 need to be considered in light of the definition this study provided of “learning leadership” (Keppell et al., 2011, pp. 14-15). That is:

*We....used the term “learning leadership” as a collective noun - an organisational “hum” made possible through the sum total of strategies and activities, and connected actions of individuals and groups.*

“Leadership development opportunities”, according to our definition, occur when staff are provided with opportunities, time, support and intrinsic or extrinsic rewards to collaboratively engage in authentic learning opportunities related to learning design problems and to then share the outcomes. All the case studies provide evidence of this notion of “leadership development”. In addition, the Teaching Fellowship Scheme, through the process of orienting, mentoring and supporting Teaching Fellows, provided explicit opportunities for individuals to develop leadership.

Devlin et al. (2012a, pp.17-33) noted seven insights into sustainable improvement in learning and teaching. Three of these insights (1, 2 and 6) were clearly evident in the case studies. That is, sustainability is supported when:

- (1) Efforts to improve the quality of teaching and learning are aligned with the strategic direction of the university. (However, all the case studies were generated through institutional strategies, so this alignment is expected. Also note discussion below).**
- (2) Senior executives support teaching and learning enhancement and resources for those improvements are allocated as part of the university’s planning and budget cycle.**
- (6) A distributed teaching and learning support structure exists within the institution and is coordinated from the centre.**

One of these insights (Devlin et al., 2012a, p. 22) was evident in the Teaching Fellowship Scheme at CSU, the faculty scholarship project at MU, and, to a lesser degree, in the CSUED internal conference. That is, sustainability is supported when:

- (3) Staff workload allocations allow time for innovation, enhancement and improvement in teaching and learning.**

However, the case study on the CSUED was not developed at the level of granularity of the practices that lead to the conference presentations. No conclusions can be drawn about whether or not workload allocation was provided for staff to take the time to reflect on practice, write an abstract for the conference or prepare a presentation. Sponsorship funding was provided to attend the conferences—and it is clear that staff vote with their feet because of the increasing numbers attending—however, no data exists to enable insights to be gleaned about workload allocation to attend the CSUEDs. It is known that even when Teaching Fellows are allocated funding and time, pressure on that time occurs. In the case of the introduction of ePortfolios, early adopters' use of a new tool is typically enthusiasm-based and informal, and, by its very nature, not necessarily factored into workloads.

The case studies were written at a level of granularity that did not provide data concerning external collaborations, although the research team are aware of collaborations - such as the one underpinning this study. The CSU and MU provide opportunities for research and scholarship related to learning and teaching. What we know is that Teaching Fellows published their work in peer-reviewed articles (See TFS case study) and that the CSUEds provided an opportunity for CSU staff to report scholarly learning and teaching and research.

The study does not illuminate two of Devlin et al.'s (2012a, p. 24, p. 33) insights: the study was not evaluative, and therefore cannot comment on how effective institutional leadership was; and the study did not focus on “Mechanisms to recognise excellence” - presentations at the CSUEDs by award winners were noted on the CSUED conference programs. Two Teaching Fellows have gone on to win internal and external awards. Award winners are also clearly noted on both the CSU and MU websites. However, a case study was not developed that recognised excellence.

This study found that innovation needs to be aligned to institutional vision (as discussed above under list point 1). But it also found that the institution needs to manage the tensions that can exist between alignment, creativity and innovation. The former concurs with Devlin et al.'s (2012a, p. 17-18) insight that “[e]fforts to improve the quality of teaching and learning are aligned with the strategic direction of the university”. However, the case studies hinted that tension sometimes existed between innovation and institutional norms. At times, innovation was resisted, difficult to mainstream, hard to resource and not enough time was available to create exemplars or share beyond the point of generation. At other times innovation was rewarded, supported and generated influence - as the impact and connection maps illustrated. More needs to be understood about innovation-in-action, and the ways in which innovation (as well as creativity and disruption) at all levels of the institution can be aligned to institutional vision and norms while managing the tensions of alignment.

## Reflection

The study gave the research partners an opportunity to “take stock” of the strategies and activities both CSU and MU had developed as mechanisms for fostering innovation in blended and flexible learning and DE during the past five years. Annual learning and teaching conferences, change through exemplars and faculty scholars are common across the sector.

Transforming the known strategies into case studies was, in many ways, an exercise asked of the staff at their respective institutions when they apply for awards, a promotion, a Teaching

Fellowship or present at a conference. Through the process of creating case studies, this research grappled with some key questions: What was meant by “learning leadership”? What notions of leadership underpinned the strategies? What was more significant - the approach to leadership or the values that underpinned whatever approach was used? What was the relationship between strategic intent and innovation?

This last question leads to our final reflection. This study considered strategies and activities generated from the centre through delegated leadership. Alignment with strategic intent, at least at the level of the strategy, was clear. This study was not evaluative, so it cannot form conclusions about “what works” (as cited in Devlin et al., 2012a, p. 35) in an evaluative or comparative sense, but we have established lessons to inform future thinking. In particular, the study has highlighted the need to better map the connections between the strategies adopted at each institution to maximise those that work in terms of change across the whole institution. Although many people were involved in the big and small actions represented through the case studies, sometimes the small actions were local and marginalised and sometimes the big actions had limited sustainable reach. Further research is needed; particularly to go beyond a descriptive understanding to an evaluative and comparative understanding to ensure the strategies and activities that are funded and pursued assist universities, and learning and teaching staff to be resilient, competitive and relevant in the future.

In summary—and reiterating the insights drawn from Streaming down from the top (Massey case study)—the case studies more generally suggested that “micro leaders” emerge and are vital at different levels within an institution, especially in situations where change is directed from the top. More to the point, change agents and opinion leaders working in the academic heartland and who are widely respected by peers play a crucial role in the diffusion of innovation. In this respect, learning leadership goes well beyond those in positions of formal responsibility and has more to do with influence and the types of networks and relationships leaders establish with colleagues. The ability of micro leaders to affect change is also contingent on the readiness of the organisational sub culture.

This study also reflected on the outcomes of the leadership approaches identified in the cases, all of which distributed decision-making. Although the case studies existed at different levels of the two institutions and informal connections existed at the level of the activities, the connections between the strategies were not always clear. Teaching Fellows, for example, attended CSU Educational Conferences and their activities fed into School and Faculty level developments. However, this was informal, uneven and not always well known. Even though the strategies and activities were aligned with strategic intent in the sense that they were developed in response to the aims of each university, it was less clear if there was a shared, consistent or collective understanding through activities as to what that vision might be. The Evaluator’s comments of the project was that more time needed to be spent in future projects to:

- **Make the study accessible to “the many”**
- **Translate the findings into “actionable recommendations” within the partner institutions.**

In response to this feedback, a Short Report has now been produced from the Final Report. See Deliverables in the Executive Summary for details.

In terms of the latter, the Evaluator noted that translating the findings into actionable recommendations for CSU and MU was “a difficult undertaking, given ethical, political and institutional sensitivities”. This study was limited, was not evaluative and was not designed to make recommendations to improve the status quo. However, there are five “take home” messages:

- 1 Mapping – Strategies and activities generated from the centre and distributed throughout an institution need to be mapped as a basis for future strategic planning, much in the same way that a course needs to be mapped when undergoing curriculum renewal.**
- 2 Evaluation – Strategies and activities generated from the centre could be evaluated from the outside, rather than evaluated as experienced from the inside.**
- 3 Maximum Impact – Better understanding needs to be developed concerning what works effectively in a comparative sense; that is, clarify the initiatives that should be strongly supported that will have maximum impact on a wide range of practices and staff capacity.**
- 4 “Macro- influencing” – “Top down” leadership is important. Leadership development strategies need to be in place to assist positional leaders to develop leadership capabilities.**
- 5 “Micro-influencing” – “Micro-leadership” and “micro-influencing” is important. Further work is needed to better understand the best ways of supporting leadership activities, for example through professional networked learning, workloads and resources.**

It has become de rigueur to associate innovation in higher education with leadership, albeit with a strong emphasis on distributive approaches. Is a focus on capacity building in learning and teaching of most interest to micro innovators? As the study unfolded—and the researchers read and listened—a question became clear: had the focus on leadership, driven from the macro level of the sector and the institution missed the hum of innovation?

The study concludes by considering the assumptions implicit within the five leadership approaches identified through the case studies that leadership distribution (whether delegated, distributive or networked) would form a sound basis for alignment to strategic intent. However, the reason for asking the research question in the first place was because both institutions wanted to inspire its constituents to embrace new approaches to learning and teaching at a whole-of-institution level and through deep change. More questions need to be asked about the way in which the challenges associated with stimulating change for learning and teaching are taken up and which messages (institutional or otherwise) provide the lens through which strategic intent is considered.

## Dissemination

### 1 wikiResearcher

A DeHub wikiResearcher was used throughout the project to communicate developments as they occurred. Copies of the Full and Short Reports can be found on the wikiResearcher. <[www.wikiresearcher.org/DEHub\\_Research\\_Projects/Charles\\_Sturt\\_University](http://www.wikiresearcher.org/DEHub_Research_Projects/Charles_Sturt_University)>

### 2 A Blog that presents html-rich case studies

<<http://learningleadershipstudy.wordpress.com/>>.

### 3 A short report

Childs, M., Brown, M., Keppell, M., Nicholas, Z., Hunter, C., & Hard, N. (2012). *Learning leadership: the big and small actions of many people - a short report*. Available at <[www.wikiresearcher.org/images/a/a9/Short\\_report\\_cover\\_merged.pdf](http://www.wikiresearcher.org/images/a/a9/Short_report_cover_merged.pdf)>

### 4 A presentation at the 2011 Australian Society for Computers in Learning in Tertiary Education (ascilite) Conference, *Changing Demands, Changing Directions*, 4-7th December, Hobart.

The Conference provided an opportunity for the research team to present the project adjustment and research question to a community of peers. A powerpoint presentation was shared: Childs, M., Brown, M., Keppell, M., Hunter, C., Hard, N., & Hughes, H. (2011). *Fostering institutional change through learning leadership-a study of adaptation in blended and flexible learning, distance and open education*. Retrieved from <[www.slideshare.net/MerilynChilds/fostering-learning-leadership](http://www.slideshare.net/MerilynChilds/fostering-learning-leadership)>

### 5 A concise paper of the presentation at the 2011 Australian Society for Computers in Learning in Tertiary Education (ascilite) Conference, *Changing Demands, Changing Directions*, 4-7th December, Hobart.

Childs, M., Keppell, M., Brown, M., Hunter, C., Hard, N., & Hughes, H. (2011). *Fostering institutional change and learning leadership - a study of stories of adaptation in blended and flexible learning and distance education*. In G. Williams, P. Statham, N. Brown & B. Cleland (Eds.) *Changing Demands, Changing Directions. Proceedings ascilite Hobart 2011*. (pp.220-226). Retrieved from <[www.ascilite.org.au/conferences/hobart11/procs/Childs-concise.pdf](http://www.ascilite.org.au/conferences/hobart11/procs/Childs-concise.pdf)>

### 6 A presentation at the 2012 Higher Education Research Development Society of Australasia (HERDSA), Hobart, 2-5th July.

Childs, M., Keppell, M., Brown, M., Hunter, C., & Hard, N. (2012, July). *Learning leadership in Higher Education- the big and small actions of many people*. Paper presented at the Connections in Higher Education, HERDSA Conference, Hobart, Tasmania. Retrieved from <<http://www.events.cdesign.com.au/ei/viewpdf.asp?id=314&file=/srv3/events/eventwin/docs/pdf/herdsa2012abstract00088.pdf>>



**7 A presentation to the CSU community, at a 59Minutes@FLI virtual workshop, 15th June 2012.**

Childs, M., Brown, M., Keppell, M., Nicholas, Z., Hunter, C., & Hard, N. (2012, June 15) Hearing the hum of learning leadership. *59Minutes@FLI*.

**8 A presentation to the CSU community, at a 59Minutes@FLI virtual workshop, 15th June 2012.**

Childs, M., Brown, M., Keppell, M., Nicholas, Z., Hunter, C. & Hard, N. (2012, June 15) Hearing the hum of learning leadership. *59Minutes@FLI*.

**9 Distribution of the Full and Short Report through Social Media**

Both reports were distributed widely through social media, including Delicious, Yammer (CSU), Twitter (@FLI and @MerilynChilds), Blog (Professor Keppell and Professor Brown).

**10 Distribution of the Short Report through professional networks**

The short report will be distributed widely through professional networks such as Australian Society for Computers in Learning in Tertiary Education (ascilite), members of the National Network Initiative (NATA) and through leadership networks established by the ALTC such as SaMnet (Science and Mathematics network of Australian university educators).

**11 Report summary, DEQuarterly**

Childs, M., Brown, M., Keppell, M., Hard, N., & Hunter, C. (2011). Building understanding of learning leadership, innovation and institutional change in blended and flexible, open and distance education. *DE Quarterly*, 91, p.4-5. Retrieved from <[http://archive.dehub.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/DEQuarterly-Spring-2011\\_Summer-2012-Edition-No-91.pdf](http://archive.dehub.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/DEQuarterly-Spring-2011_Summer-2012-Edition-No-91.pdf)>

## Summary of Project Evaluation

### Formative Evaluation

The evaluation strategy involved an approach that triangulated research team, External Advisory Group and External Evaluator with project aims and deliverables as project adjustments were considered and implemented. The research was conducted on the basis of a partnership. Concurrent with this study, CSU and MU conducted a second study, also funded by DeHub, titled, *In their own words: Learning from the experiences of first time distance students* (2011). Some members of the “learning leadership” research team were simultaneously on the *In their own words* research team; specifically Mark Brown, Mike Keppell and Natasha Hard. The External Advisory Group provided critical feedback on both projects, which were presented sequentially at Group meetings. The simultaneous conduct of the two projects provided opportunities for both partners to build knowledge and understanding of the respective institution’s modus operandi, habitus, strategies and activities beyond the questions pursued by the research



projects. This is hard to quantify, but is noted here as a qualitative outcome of the partnership that fed into the formative evaluation process.

The EAG meetings were organised to reflect key milestones in the lives of the two projects. It was also the case that members of the EAGs were connected to the research team: members through professional networks; and, because the research was situated within the contexts of both institutions, informal collegial conversations provided opportunities to reflect critically about the projects. Research team members also participated in a number of research workshops held physically and virtually at both institutions. These provided the opportunity to reflect conceptually, methodologically and operationally on the study.

The role of the External Evaluator was critical to the development of the research, and was of particular importance in terms of the project adjustment that took place in November 2011 in response to insights gleaned from the case studies. The evaluator provided a formative evaluation approach based on a critical incident methodology. This enabled informed decision making that ensured the necessary project adjustments were robust and aligned to achievement of the project deliverables.

## Summative Evaluation

The external summative evaluation report prepared by Associate Professor Regine Wagner is provided in Appendix E.

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This reference list includes those cited in both the case studies (Appendix B and C) and the Report.

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# Appendix A Project Methodology

## Case Study Method

The research aimed to build insights derived from existing practice through case studies which were largely developed using existing data. A descriptive case study approach was adopted, using thick description developed employing primary and secondary data (See for example: Yin, 1981; Merriam, 1988).

## Sampling

Criterion based purposive sampling was adopted; the cases were:

- Drawn from macro, meso and micro levels of the organisations
- Had strong alignment to institutional strategies and directions in BFL and DE
- Well known and understood by the research team
- Convenient, with a high existing data availability of existing data which was published in the public domain

Proposals for the eight case studies were developed and shared collaboratively using an online mind-mapping tool. A number of research team meetings were held using a desk-top sharing technology and agreement reached concerning the cases.

## Case studies

Four strategies were chosen in response to these criteria.

Level	Learning and teaching strategies
Macro	Annual learning and teaching conference (CSU)
Meso	Introduction of new technology - ePortfolios (CSU) and Stream (MU)
Meso (Scheme) and Micro (Teaching Fellows)	Teaching Fellowship Scheme (CSU)
Micro	Collaborative curriculum renewal (CSU)

Table 2: Learning and teaching strategies

From these four broad strategies, eight case studies were developed.

Level of institution	Learning and teaching strategy	Case study
Macro (institution wide)	Annual learning and teaching conference (CSU)	The Charles Sturt University annual Educational Conferences (CSUEDs) 2008-2010
	Introduction of new technology	Introduction of an ePortfolio tool (CSU, 2009-2010)
	Teaching Fellowship Scheme	The Flexible Learning Institute Teaching Fellowship Scheme (CSU, 2008-2011)
Meso (School or Faculty level)	Introduction of new technology	Stream in Business (MU, 2009 - 2011)
Micro (Pedagogy, subject or course level) <sup>10</sup>	Introduction of new technology	Stream in the Social Sciences (MU, 2009 - 2010)
Micro	Teaching Fellowship Scheme	Dr John Rafferty, Murray School of Education, Charles Sturt University. Informal learning spaces-interactions between time, space and teaching and learning (CSU, 2011)
Micro	Teaching Fellowship Scheme	Brad Edlington, School of Policing, Charles Sturt University. Learning leadership through problem-based learning (CSU, 2011 - 2012).
Micro	Collaborative curriculum renewal	Redesigning courses through course team symposiums (CSU)

Table 3: The eight case studies derived from the sample of strategies

Of the eight case studies developed, six were largely retrospective and historic, enhanced with limited primary contemporaneous data collection. Two of the case studies (CSU Teaching Fellows) were contemporaneous. The case studies were appreciative and descriptive rather than evaluative. That is, did not evaluate the efficacy or quality of the strategy or activities.

<sup>10</sup> Pedagogy, paper or program level (New Zealand)

## Data collection

Table 4 outlines the specific data collection procedures used for each case study.

Case study	Data	Authored by
The Charles Sturt University annual Educational Conferences (CSUEDs) 2008-2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CSUED programs, available in the public domain 2008-2010</li> <li>CSU staff who presented at two or more CSUEDs 2008-2010 (n=35) were invited to complete a <a href="#">questionnaire</a> that asked them to reflect on their participation. 13 agreed to participate, and 9 completed the questionnaire.</li> <li>Internal memo, used with permission.</li> <li>Tacit knowledge held by the researcher</li> </ul>	Merilyn Childs, CI, Convenor CSUED 2008, 2009, 2012
Introduction of an ePortfolio tool (CSU, 2009-2010)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Document analysis of relevant reports, websites, publications and openly shared webfolios</li> <li>Data analysis of ePortfolio usages and statistics</li> <li>A questionnaire (n=6) was given to participants from the initial 2009 pilot group</li> <li>Impact maps (n=3) were created with participants from the questionnaire recipients who opted in to this additional activity.</li> <li>Tacit knowledge held by the researcher</li> </ul>	Carole Hunter (ePortfolio Project Lead, 2009-2010)
The Flexible Learning Institute Teaching Fellowship Scheme (CSU, 2008-2011)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Webfolios used to advertise the TFS available in the public domain.</li> <li>The FLI website, pertaining to the Teaching Fellowship Scheme</li> <li>Published accounts of the TFS</li> <li>Digital media produced as an outcome of the TFS</li> <li>Procedural documents (permission granted)</li> <li>Tacit knowledge held by researchers</li> </ul>	Mike Keppell, Natasha Hard (Research Assistant, Learning Leadership Project) & Betsy Lyon (Project Officer, TFS 2008-2011)
Stream in Business (MU, 2009-2011)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Analysis of project documents</li> <li>Student and staff surveys</li> <li>Analytics from the LMS</li> <li>Unpublished institutional reports</li> <li>Published accounts of the implementation of Stream</li> <li>Tacit knowledge held by the researchers</li> </ul>	Mark Brown, Helen Hughes & Robyn Walker
Stream in the Social Sciences (MU, 2009-2010)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Analysis of project documents</li> <li>Student surveys</li> <li>Unpublished institutional reports</li> <li>Published accounts of the implementation of Stream</li> <li>Video footage on the initiative</li> <li>Tacit knowledge held by the researchers</li> </ul>	Mark Brown, Helen Hughes & Scott Symonds
Dr John Rafferty, Murray School of Education, Charles Sturt University. Informal learning spaces-interactions between time, space and teaching and learning (CSU, 2011)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1:1 interviews drawn from a parallel study on distributive leadership (Ethics Approval 2011-037)</li> <li>Video footage develop as a part of a Flexible Learning Institute Initiative on blended and flexible learning</li> <li>Publications by Dr Rafferty</li> <li>Autobiographical and editing contributions made by Dr Rafferty to the case study</li> </ul>	Dr John Rafferty, Mike Keppell & Natasha Hard (Research Assistant, Learning Leadership Project)
Brad Edlington, School of Policing, Charles Sturt University. Learning leadership through problem-based learning (CSU, 2011-2012).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A range of other publicly available documents. and media</li> <li>Discussions between Dr Rafferty and the researcher</li> <li>1:1 interviews drawn from a parallel study on distributive leadership (Ethics Approval 2011-037)</li> <li>Video footage develop as a part of a Flexible Learning Institute initiative on blended and flexible learning</li> <li>Publications by Mr Edlington</li> <li>Autobiographical and editing contributions made by Mr Edlington</li> </ul>	Brad Edlington & Natasha Hard (Research Assistant, Learning Leadership Project)
Redesigning courses through course team symposiums (CSU)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A range of other publicly available documents and media</li> <li>Discussions between Mr Edlington and the researcher</li> <li>Analysis of documents emerging from the Course Symposiums, as well as relevant and publicly available websites</li> <li>A questionnaire (n=4) completed by Course Leaders (n=2) and Educational Designers (n=2) leading the symposiums</li> <li>A focus group with agreeing questionnaire recipients who opted in to this additional activity.</li> </ul>	Carole Hunter (Strategic Projects Coordinator, FLI 2011) BFL Standards

Table 4: Data collection procedures



## Data analysis

Headings were developed to create a common structure for writing the case studies. These headings also established a thematic structure derived from the research teams situated understanding of each case study. The headings provided each author with an opportunity to provide an overview of each case study, as well as articulate aspects of the activity using existing data. Themes were derived from the cases, and these were developed as five findings. Theory formation was derived from the findings and developed as three lessons learnt (principles).

## Appendix B The changing nature of learning and teaching at Charles Sturt University 2008-2011, authored by Janet Buchan

A more detailed version of this paper can be found at <http://learningleadershipstudy.wordpress.com/>.

Charles Sturt University is a regional, multi-campus university based in NSW with study centres in Melbourne and Sydney, a campus in Ontario, Canada, as well as links with international partner institutions. The multi-campus nature of CSU (Bathurst, Wagga Wagga, Albury-Wodonga, Orange, Canberra, Parramatta, Manly, Dubbo and Ontario Canada) creates particular challenges for the logistics of administration, teaching and support of learning and teaching. Faculties, divisions and institutes must necessarily work across the campuses and all four faculties have at least one fully cross-campus school. CSU is a dual-mode university offering courses (programs) in on-campus and distance education (DE) modes. In 2010 the University had approximately 38,000 students with approximately two-thirds enrolled as DE students.

The official enrolment mode choices for students in subjects is either internal (on-campus) or DE. From 2006 to 2011, there was an increasing use of blended and flexible learning (BFL), in its broadest sense, as a pedagogical approach to enhancing the student learning experience. However, as will be seen, the University infrastructure, policy and processes did not always adequately support BFL approaches (Buchan, Rafferty & Munday, 2009). The introduction in 2007/2008 of a new online learning environment CSU Interact (the open source Sakai collaborative Learning environment) and progressive introduction of new educational technology and improved infrastructure (campus spaces) has contributed to the uptake of blended learning approaches.

CSU subscribes to institutional centralised strategic planning processes which guide the long term direction of the university. One of CSU's stated commitments in its 2007-2011 University Strategy was, "... to achieving excellence in education for the professions and to maintaining national leadership in flexible and distance education" (Charles Sturt University, 2006).

Planned actions to achieve that vision included:

- providing an accessible and effective learning environment for all students, regardless of location or mode of study.
- strengthening learning and teaching partnerships with the professions and industry.
- promoting, recognising and supporting good practice in learning and teaching (Charles Sturt University, 2012).

Although there is a strong emphasis on learning and teaching at the university, the majority of full-time academic teaching staff do not necessarily have dual research and teaching roles; casual (contract) staff account for a high proportion of the teaching load. In some cases, up to 70 per cent of subjects in a course may be taught by casual staff members. This fits well with CSU's

focus on educating for the professions where part-time or casual staff can be actively practicing in their field as well as teaching in the discipline - although this strategy does contribute to significant problems with continuity of staffing and maintaining a holistic approach to courses and programs. The increasing integration of educational technology into courses means there is a steep learning curve for new staff in getting up to speed with managing their online subject environment.

The notion of a sedentary academic in an “ivory” tower giving the occasional lecture to eager young students is somewhat mythical - at least at CSU. Apart from the fact that the institution has an eclectic mix of nine unique and distinctive campuses with few “ivory towers” in sight (see <[www.csu.edu.au/about/locations](http://www.csu.edu.au/about/locations)>, retrieved 21st May 2012), there is a high proportion of mature-aged students enrolled in DE courses which significantly changes the demographics. While there are many “normal” on-campus classes at CSU, the varied Faculty approaches to course delivery and cross-campus schools necessitate a broad range of teaching “modes” and strategies. Academics can be expected to travel regularly between campuses (in a few cases up to several hundred kilometres per week) to keep up with face-to-face teaching commitments. Others may engage in live interactive video teaching (IVT) or synchronous virtual classroom activities (using Wimba - CSU’s Online Meeting tool) to teach students on different campuses enrolled in a single subject, or to work through anti-social time zones when communicating with CSU’s Ontario campus staff and students. Those Staff who are teaching fully DE courses may never meet their students face-to-face, while other DE lecturers dedicate a number of days of their non-teaching period (vacation?) to residential schools and field trips. Staff also work on site with partner institutions and students in Asia (China and Malaysia).

While the aspirational goals for providing “...an accessible and effective learning environment for all students, regardless of location or mode of study” (Charles Sturt University, 2012) may contribute positively to the student learning experience, the corollary is that the academic role at CSU requires considerable versatility and the ongoing development of a range of skills. At a minimum, the “average” academic needs to be a researcher, writer of academic publications, teacher, curriculum developer, writer and editor of subject resources in a variety of media, classroom lecturer, tutor, online publisher of learning resources, a competent online teacher/facilitator - and extremely hard working.

Excellence in learning and teaching at CSU is encouraged through a wide range of strategies distributed across the institution at macro, meso and micro levels. It includes: strategies and activities from the Senate, the DVC/Academic and related roles, the Division of Learning and Teaching Services, the Flexible Learning Institute and the Education for Practice Institute; and Divisions, Faculties and Schools and through the individual and collaborative activities of staff during a period of rapid technological change.

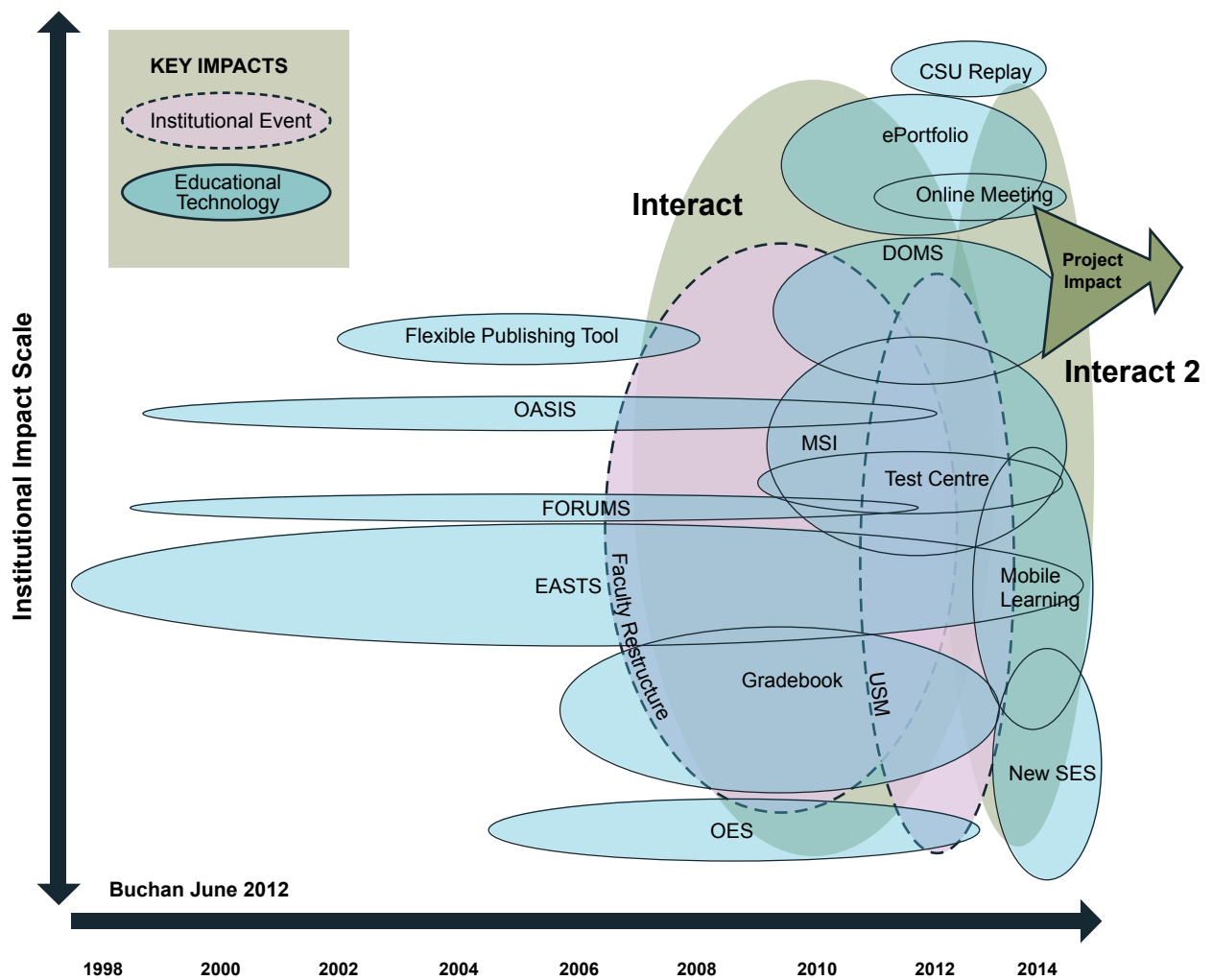


Figure 1: A para-analysis view of the impact of teaching and administrative systems used by academic staff in their work at CSU (after Buchan 2010). Reprinted here with the permission of the author.

# Appendix C

## The changing nature of learning and teaching at Massey University 2008-2011, authored by Mark Brown

Massey University (MU) is New Zealand's only national university with campuses in Albany, Manawatu and Wellington. The Manawatu Campus, located in the lower North Island regional city of Palmerston North (population 85 000), is the original "home" of Massey and remains the official head office. Most of the University's senior leadership team, including the Vice-Chancellor, Deputy Vice-Chancellor and six Assistant Vice-Chancellors are based in University House on the Manawatu Campus.

As a dual mode university, MU has been offering distance education (DE) for over 50 years. In December 2010 MU supported 16 299 (Head Count) distance learners. An additional 18 566 (Head Count) students were spread across its three other campuses. The Albany Campus was established as a new development on the North Shore of Auckland, New Zealand's largest city, almost 20 years ago. MU's Wellington Campus, located in the heart of the Central Business District, was established over a decade ago with the merger of the Wellington Polytechnic. It is home of the College of Creative Arts, located in the iconic old National Museum of New Zealand building, which was acquired shortly after the merger. The Palmerston North campus was established in 1923 and thus, with the addition of the Wellington-based Design School, giving MU a history of over 125 years.

Currently all five of MU's academic colleges - Business, Creative Arts, Education, Humanities and Social Sciences, and Sciences - offer degree programs on more than one campus and the only College not involved in providing distance education is Creative Arts. MU has the nation's only Veterinary School and its official signature platforms include Agriculture and Life Sciences, Art and Humanities, Communication, Design and Fine Arts, Education, Engineering and Food Technology, Finance and Economics, Health, Entrepreneurial Management, Land, Water and Environment, Maori Knowledge and Indigenous Development, and Natural Sciences and Social Sciences.

Internationalisation is a strong feature of the MU culture with almost 4000 international students spread across its three main campuses. MU also has a small satellite campus in Singapore offering undergraduate degrees in Food Technology and Aviation Management, and a growing development in Brunei in the area of Defence and Strategic Studies. Most of these offshore initiatives involve a mix of face-to-face teaching combined with online and distance delivery. Each year over 1000 New Zealand citizens living overseas enrol through MU's distance education provision. In 2010, the University changed its academic regulations to increase opportunities for international students to study by distance to accommodate a multi-million dollar initiative funded by the World Bank in flexible and distance delivered Master of Public Health and Master of Veterinary Science for health professionals living in India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Afghanistan and Nepal. Other strategically important distance education initiatives targeting international students living overseas include postgraduate programs in Disaster Management, Education and English Language.

MU's international ambitions are strongly influenced by its goal to build on its reputation for high quality research grounded in real-world issues and the big problems of the 21st century. In this regard, MU aims to lift its current ranking in international comparisons by offering programs that address "... sustainable resource use, citizenship in a digital world, community resilience in times of natural and induced environmental challenges, global economic issues, health and wellbeing, and food security, to name a few" (Massey University, 2012b, p. 1). Another contributing factor to MU's renewed focus on building stronger international connections is the Government's recent introduction of a capped funding model, which limits the potential for growth in the domestic market.

The above goals and initiatives are clearly articulated within MU's vision: "To be New Zealand's defining university and a world leader in higher education and scholarship". More specifically, in the words of the Vice-Chancellor, Hon. Steve Maharey, "What drives us is capacity to define the future of our nation and our commitment to take what is special about New Zealand to the world" (Massey University, 2010, p. 28). The mission of carving out a new future and taking the best of New Zealand to the world is encapsulated in MU's by-line, "Engine of the new New Zealand".

Against this backdrop of this mission coupled with MU's long history as a dual mode provider, the University has made a large investment in new digital media to support new models of online, flexible and distance learning. In 2009 Massey initiated a NZ\$4.5 million three-year project to establish the Stream online platform, which, at its core, involved the replacement of WebCT with the implementation of Moodle as the University's new Learning Management System (LMS). The name of the new online platform was adopted after considering a number of options and is described to students in the following way:

*Stream is a metaphor for knowledge. Always flowing and moving, the stream runs at different speeds, directions and strengths. The stream feeds the surrounding and provides life to everyone, as does life-long learning and connects knowledge, creating a rich and vibrant environment. The three bytes of the Stream logo represent the traditional Maori view of the three baskets of knowledge. The baskets (kete) encompass the experience of our senses (te kete aronui), the understanding of what lies behind those experiences (te kete tuauri) and the experience we have, particularly in ritual (te kete tuatea). The byte also represents the stepping-stones to encourage people to take bold, new steps, follow the paths down the stream, and access the knowledge and expertise Massey has to offer (Massey University, 2012a).*

Stream is more than just Moodle and includes a range of "core and custom" online tools including Adobe Connect, Adobe Presenter, Lightwork, Mahara, MediaSite, SBL-Interactive, Turnitin, and so on. The original business case for the Stream Project identified three strategic drivers:

- **To respond to the challenge of the so-called Google Generation;**
- **To enhance the quality of teaching and thereby maintain Massey's University pre-eminent status as a flexible learning and distance education provider;**

- **To introduce a new blended model of teaching that increases the level of student engagement and provides learning experiences relevant to the requirements of today's Knowledge Society (Brown, Paewai & Suddaby, 2010).**

Importantly, the Stream Project was aligned and occurred in tandem with the development of a new University strategic plan known as The Road to 2020. This Strategy was a major university-wide undertaking initiated in 2009 by MU's new Vice-Chancellor and includes six Big Goals. The Big Goal for Teaching and Learning is a commitment to ensuring "an exceptional and distinctive learning experience at Massey for all students" (Massey University, 2012b, p. 5). A key sub goal and defining feature of the Massey learning experience is an explicit commitment to exploiting the potential of new digital media on a program-wide basis.

Since the introduction of Stream, the University has continued to invest in the digitalisation of teaching and learning, as evidenced by the development of new policies and practices for the design and delivery of study resources, which attempt to embed new digital media in the fabric of the Massey experience. Digital learning is one of six defining elements (Applied, Research-led, Comprehensive, Digital, International and Distance and Life-long Learning) identified in the Massey model of teaching and learning. This model is described in the University's Teaching and Learning Framework, launched in 2011 after the culmination of two years work, which aimed to engender a strong culture of creativity, innovation and connectedness among students, staff and in the curriculum.

Finally, MU also established, in 2011, the Distance Education and Learning Futures Alliance (DELFA) which aimed to support new models and emerging approaches to tertiary education for today's digitally wired, globally connected and rapidly changing higher education landscape. DELFA brings together a unique mix of leading scholars and tertiary practitioners to create a powerful community of practice to support new innovations in teaching and learning. Its mission is to be a driving force and world leader in defining and transforming the nature of online, blended and distance education for today's modern digital-era university.



# Appendix D Case Studies

Html-rich versions of these case studies can be found at <<http://learningleadershipstudy.wordpress.com/>>

## Building learning and teaching conversations: Charles Sturt University Annual Educational Conferences (CSUEDs)

Merilyn Childs

### Background

‘CSUED’ is short for ‘Charles Sturt University Educational Conferences’. These conferences are held annually over several days, typically in November in the last week of examinations/assessments. They rotate between the Bathurst, Wagga Wagga and Albury-Wodonga (NSW Australia) campuses, with virtual opportunities for Ontario staff (Canada) to attend (2010 and 2011). Each year the CSUED offers a different theme, developed as a reflection of internal CSU strategic directions, and external developments in the disciplinary, professional and policy landscapes shaping learning and teaching in Higher Education. Planning for the CSUEDs rotate each year between the Education for Practice Institute, the Division of Learning and Teaching Services, and the Flexible Learning Institute, and the respective hosts shape the focus, key-note speakers and activities. Speakers of international reputation are invited to provide a Key Note address, and CSU staff have an opportunity to participate in plenary, papers and workshops that range from novice presenters and early career faculty, to the highly experienced. Despite significant travel often required due to the dispersed nature of the CSU campuses across New South Wales, limited sponsorship for travel and accommodation, competition with external conferences and other teaching requirements, attendance at the CSUEDs is robust, and has grown during the past few years from 120 staff in 2008; to approximately 190 in 2010, 2011 and 2012.

### Visions & Initial Targets

The following statement was made about the CSUEDs:

*One of the successful ways in which CSU has built impetus around learning and teaching has been through internal conferences where good practice and scholarship in teaching are shared. The CSU Learning and Teaching conference has become a major strategy for the dissemination of good practice within the University, generating enthusiasm, new ideas and collaborative projects. Because many delegates travel to the conference there is a strong commitment to the activity and an intensity of engagement (Tulloch, Keppell & Higgs, 2008, p. 1).*

The annual CSU Educational Conferences (CSUEDs) has been developed with the view that teaching conferences provide a model of professional development. “Attending learning and teaching conferences” was identified by Scott, Coates and Anderson (2008, p. 96) as a formal approach to leadership development, although potentially less favoured by academics than learning on-the-job. Thus, to encourage staff to attend it is necessary that internal learning and teaching conferences have high relevance, are specific, interesting, and provide participants with a sense of community and participation. Such learning and teaching conferences have also gained popularity in Australian Universities as a mechanism for celebrating achievements and experimentation, and as an institutional means of encouraging certain directions in learning and teaching conversations, practices and collaborations. In addition, each CSUED has aims. For example, in 2012, the aim was to encourage CSU staff to consider Higher Education in a digital age.

## Initial Goals

The following goals were identified for the establishment of an annual learning and teaching conference at CSU:

- Sharing of innovative and good teaching and learning practices
- Promoting research and scholarship in teaching and learning
- Providing opportunities for staff to present their teaching and educational research work.
- Raising key educational issues for discussion
- Disseminating information on coming events (e.g. AUQA), educational developments etc
- Promoting awareness of ... awards, grants, resources and other initiatives
- Build CSU capacity to mentor ... applicants [for awards] and provide opportunities for collaboration on and mentoring...
- Staff development in the scholarship, enhancement and support of quality learning and teaching
- Networking including development and extension of [other relevant networks]

The initial goals were further enhanced when the Australian Learning and Teaching Council awarded a Promoting Excellence Initiative (PEI) Grant to CSU. This funding was partially used to provide sponsorship CSU staff to attend the annual CSU conferences held in Wagga Wagga in 2008, and Thurgoona (near Albury) in 2009, with a view to building and strengthening networks related to learning and teaching at CSU. In 2010-2012, the budget allocation was by the DVC/Academic, with the funds managed through a Division of Learning and Teaching cost centre, and funding provided from the four faculties at CSU. During 2008-2011, the CSUEDs have progressively matured in planning and focus, and grown in popularity, rising from 110-120 participants in 2008 to 180 participants in 2010. Prior to 2009, registration and planning for the

CSUEDs were managed via email and desk-top files. In 2009, a new step was taken, and the CSUEDs moved into an online registration portal. This step was taken for a number of reasons - including as a means of ensuring that the CSUED conference lead CSU staff into managing their own registration in an online environment, as per standard industry practices.

## Strategies & Activities

### Collaborative Planning

Up until 2012, hosting of the CSUEDs has been rotated annually between the Education for Practice Institute (EFPI), the Flexible Learning Institute (the FLI), and the Division of Learning and Teaching. The host convener establishes a Working Party, and this reports to a Learning Leaders group typically made up Sub-Deans Learning and Teaching, and Institute and Divisional Directors.

### Resource Allocation

The hosting body allocates resources from the respective global budget to the task, enhanced through an additional budget allocation. In 2008-2009, the budget allocation was derived from the ALTCs Promoting Excellence Initiative (PEI). In 2010-2012, the budget allocation was by the DVC Academic, with the funds managed through a Division of Learning and Teaching Services cost centre. During 2008-2011, the CSUEDs have progressively matured in planning and focus, for example, prior to 2009 registration and planning for the CSUEDs were managed via email and desk-top files. In 2009, a new step was taken, and the CSUEDs moved into an online registration portal. This step was taken for a number of reasons - including as a means of ensuring that the CSUED conference lead CSU staff into managing their own registration in an online environment, as per standard industry practices.

### Strategic Positioning

Each year the themes of CSUED were developed iteratively at the nexus of a number of driving forces - the strategic focus of the host, developments in the HE sector nationally and internationally, the strategic directions of CSU, and as a result of consultations with learning leaders at CSU. The following are the themes for 2008-2012:

- 2012 Higher Education in a Digital Age: Building connections to enhance learning and teaching
- 2011 Transforming University Education: Developing a Culture of Collaboration, Integration and Sustainability
- 2010 Educating for 2020 and Beyond
- 2009 Leading and Learning in Higher Education
- 2008 Educational Interactions and Curriculum

## Inclusivity and Professional Learning

The CSUEDs 2008-2011 are inclusive—as a rule, all submitted presentations are accepted. The CSUEDs encourages practice-based presentations as well as research presentations. Novices and experts alike are encouraged. The CSUEDs place emphasis on sharing practice rather than publishing practice. Peer review takes the form of public presentations to peers, rather than formal peer review prior to presentations.

## Distributed Leadership

The CSUEDs encourage distributed leadership in a number of ways:

- Facilitation of every session at CSUED by a CSU community member
- Plenary sessions
- Team-based presentations that focus on situated innovation in the context of learning and teaching practices

## Practice Experimentation and Continuous Improvement

Each year the design of CSUED as learning and teaching event has undergone revision. In 2011, the Education for Practice Institute introduced a dialogical process. In 2012 the Flexible Learning Institute introduced a Digital Theatre (to allow presenters to submit a presentation without attending) and a PechaKucha inspired event called 20/20 Vision.

## Outcomes

CSUED outcomes are *process-based* rather than outcomes-focused, and tied to the process of fostering and placing value on practice conversations and expressions of connections, collegiality and networks, (discussed below).

## Challenges / Limitations

The challenges in part relate to the assumption that exists that drawing together the learning and teaching community will foster collegiality and networks and lead to change. These may be incidental outcomes, but it is unclear if the explicit intention of the CSUEDs is achieved.

The process of the CSUEDs is its outcome. However, the notion that a community and conversation can be fostered by conferences is a cultural practice within the Higher Education sector that has 'taken for granted' value, and the CSUED is no different. The following comments focus attention on possible limitations with this cultural practice.

- The CSUEDs (2008-2010) reflect complex social processes that involved individuals and teams of people presenting social practices (related to learning and teaching) developed somewhere else. The constitute representations of practice, rather than practice itself.

- The CSUED case study was based on an assumption—that coming to the CSUEDs required presenter/s to reflect on practice through the process of constructing an abstract of relevance to the conference themes and to the CSU community. Presentations themselves were, therefore, ‘seen’ as evidence of reflection. Was this a fair assumption?
- The CSUEDs were not designed explicitly to ‘foster change in BFL, open and distance education’—the aim is more general in relationship to learning and teaching. That said, CSU does wish to foster change in blended and flexible learning, open and distance education, and the CSUEDs provide a strategy whereby learning leadership might be represented through presentations.
- ‘Learning leadership’ is not a term used at the CSUEDs, or by staff presenting at the CSUEDs in their abstracts. The case study makes a ‘leap of faith’ that presenters at CSUED are learning leaders, showing leadership through position, or through activity, and that presentations reflect that activity.

The second challenge relates to the fact that innovation in learning and teaching is largely presented by non-positional leaders in partnership with positional leaders who are middle managers, course directors, and sometimes Sub-Deans Learning and Teaching. It is uncommon for senior managers to present exemplars of innovative practice, and the higher up the hierarchy, the more likely to present in a plenary, and the less likely to present in a collaborative team. Senior leaders tend to present about policy directions in learning and teaching, whereas presentations related to practice experimentation tend to be presented by current teachers and educational designers. Thus, a slightly lop-sided view might be formed that those leading innovation in teaching practice are not necessarily in formal leadership roles, and those in formal leadership roles are more likely to report policy innovation rather than learning and teaching innovation. Establishing a stronger conversation about “learning leadership” regardless of position and tying that conversation more strongly to practice experimentation might be a useful way of managing this tension.

## Connections, Collegiality & Networks

The CSUEDs are a social and collegial process, and the qualitative nature of the social connections is hard to quantify. However, it is clear that a culture of collaborative presentations has developed over time. In 2008, 25 papers/workshops were presented by at least 2 presenters (35% of the total papers) and 6 papers/workshops were presented by more than 3 presenters (or 8% of the total). In 2009, collaborative papers/workshops (more than 2 presenters) had grown to 43 (40% of the total) and to 27 (or 25% of the total) with more than 3 presenters. By 2010, collaborative papers/workshops with 2 presenters or more had grown to 57 (61% of the total) and with more than 3 presenters, had grown to 30 or 32% of the total.

In summary, the total number of presentations with more than 3 presenters grew from 2008-8% to 2009-25% to 2010-32%. Some papers/workshops at the CSUEDs to the form of a ‘cast of thousands’ in the sense that they were presented by teams of people involved in a specific

practice. For example, in 2010, 10 members of a course team presented the paper “Enhancing the first year experience in the Bachelor of Agricultural Business Management”. The paper recounted a

*“staged approach to implementing the CSUDegree, with the first year experience (FYE) the focus of our attention during 2010-11. This has involved the course team considering the 6 FYE design principles, deciding on areas of priority, and adopting a number of strategies that we hope will enhance the experience of our first year students during 2011.” Similarly, a team of four presented a paper/workshop entitled “Facilitators and barriers to interdisciplinary professional ethics teaching” that focused on the barriers to and facilitators of interdisciplinary teaching of professional ethics....More generally, the workshop will provide an opportunity for staff involved with professional ethics subjects to learn with and from each other. With this in mind, the workshop will also gauge interest in creating an ongoing space for interdisciplinary discussion and sharing of resources between CSU staff with an interest in teaching ethics curriculum in professional courses in CSU.”*

It is unclear on the basis of the data whether or not networks were developed or strengthened by attendance at the CSUEDs. Evaluation data indicates that the CSUED annual dinner is well attended by delegates and that the creation of time and space for collegial conversations about learning and teaching that include senior managers is valued. The success of CSUEDs lies in the opportunity provided to talk about practice in collaboration with others, to do so in a safe institutional space that welcomes novices, and to gain insights and rub shoulders with, senior learning and teaching staff who share their thoughts at the Conference.

## Reflective Practice & Practice Experimentation

Generally speaking, the CSUEDs encouraged the CSU community to present individual and collaborative practices to a public audience of peers. These speech acts clearly involved participants in processes of representation (through titles, abstracts, papers, posters and workshops) and reflection. Reflection ranged from ‘pondering’ about novice learning and teaching experiences; to formal and formalised research. Three of the goals of the CSUEDs pertained to research and scholarship of learning and teaching (Promoting research and scholarship in teaching and learning & Staff development in the scholarship, enhancement and support of quality learning and teaching and providing opportunities for staff to present their teaching and educational research work). Papers/workshops were intimately connected to the CSU strategic directions for L&T as defined by the conference strands. For example, in 2010, the strands were:

- Practice-based education
- Blended and flexible learning
- Curriculum renewal
- Student experience & participation
- Cultural competence & Indigenous education



They were also connected to:

- Initiatives taking place at various levels throughout the University, such as through course teams, discipline teams, learning and teaching committees, working parties, research teams, Communities of Practice, as well as those represented through Senate policy and emerging governance practices (such as the CSU Degree Initiative).
- External influences, requirements and trends, such as industry regulation, Australian Learning and Teaching Council grants, Sector developments (such as blended and flexible learning) and emerging national agendas.
- Core learning and teaching environments at CSU such as Interact (the CSU virtual learning environment), Interact tools (wikis, student forums), and PebblePad (the CSU ePortfolio environment)
- Pedagogy - e.g. problem-based learning, Indigenous Education, education for practice, field placements, the social dimensions of ICT-enabled learning curriculum - e.g. subject and course redesign, ICT-enabled learning - e.g. the pedagogical use of Interact and related tools, (the CSU virtual learning environment), ePortfolios, distance education the teaching-research nexus - e.g. (i) the nexus between disciplinary knowledge and learning and teaching; or (ii) the nexus between research about learning and teaching and practice experimentation
- Examples of practice - for example, Lyn Hay's "I wear my pyjamas while my avatar wears Prada: Teaching in Second Life"; and David Prescott & Phil Sharp's "Delivering Policing PBL on Interact: a case study in flexible delivery". In 2008, 33 of the 72 papers/workshops (46%) were focused on blended and flexible learning, ICT-enabled and distance education. In 2009 46 papers/workshops (42.5%) were similarly focused, and in 2010 44 papers/workshops (47%). Consistently over the three years slightly less than 50% of the papers/workshops maintained this focus.

In terms of the scholarship of learning and teaching, the CSUED programs indicated:

- A consistent lexicon existed at the CSUEDs loosely related to research. Sometimes this lexicon related to systematic formal research, particularly in cases where research methodology had been adopted. This was however, fairly rare. In 2008 for example, one presentation referred to "using a mixed method approach", another referred to a "study" and another to a research tool (a survey). In 2009 and 2010 more references were made to systematic formal research—example, in 2009 four references were made to a "study", two to "qualitative research" and four to research methods (evaluation, survey).
- More generally, the lexicon pertained to, and was expressive of, reflective or reflected practice related to practice experimentation and innovation. That is, it largely related to the teaching-research nexus either in terms of disciplinary considerations, learning and teaching considerations, or both. The theory/practice nexus seemed to underpin a great many papers in 2009 and 2010, and informed practice experimentation. For example, in 2010, at least thirteen abstracts made



references to a theoretical framework (often noted as “the literature” or by citing authors) that was either discipline-based or learning and teaching based.

- ‘Reflected practice’ took a variety of forms. For example, some abstracts referred explicitly to “reflection/s” and “reflective inquiry” (4 in 2008; 6 in 2009; 3 in 2010) and others referred to the scholarship of learning and teaching. Some practice was considered through the lens of evaluation (3 in 2008; 2 in 2009; 3 in 2010). References were made to the work being presented as the outcomes of a study (1 in 2008; 4 in 2009; 8 in 2010).
- Although terms like “investigation”, “case study”, “pilot”, “making sense”, “inquiry” and “models” were used during 2008-2010, these terms did not necessarily connote either systematic or ad hoc research. They were often used by presenters to indicate that they had asked questions of their practice, thought about their practice, or developed emerging practice experimentation that they wanted to share. This may have been achieved through a survey to students, an evaluation of the subject, or through theory formation using literature.
- Research/methodological considerations were rarely described, although learning and teaching methodologies (in the form of approaches or strategies) commonly were. Exceptions were those presentations/workshops that were the outcome of an ALTC grant or citation or a CSU Scholarship in Learning and Teaching Award—although some of these presentations also focused on practice rather than research. Generally, across the CSUEDs, presenters did not differentiate between the use of a “survey” or an “evaluation tool” for reflective purposes; and the use of the same as methods within a formally designed research project.

## Reflections on Learning Leadership

The case study highlighted how an institutional strategy, initiated through delegated leadership, can trigger constellations of activity through an institution, through various situated responses. Funded from the Office of the Deputy Vice Chancellor, and more recently partially funded by four Faculty Deans, leadership was delegated to a Learning Leaders Committee populated by those in leadership roles such as the Directors and Deputy Directors of the Education for Practice and Flexible Learning Institutes, Sub-Deans Learning and Teaching, Divisional Head of Learning and Teaching Services, and so on.

Operationally, the CSUEDs were organised through delegated leadership; however as an event the CSUEDs aimed to bring together the CSU community and had an explicit intention of building networks and sharing innovation. Staff who attended developed their innovations at all levels of the institution, through multiple means, in authentic contexts, often involving groups and teams of people. Presentations at CSUED were aligned to strategic intent in the sense that they responded to the themes of the conferences, and engaged colleagues in dialogue about innovations at CSU. However, considerable diversity in interpretation existed, reflecting the breadth of meaning given to alignment. ‘Learning leadership’ was interpreted as a desire to showcase and celebrate, innovative learning and teaching achievements with colleagues—to be part of a community that was ‘thinking aloud’ about how to respond to challenges faced within and external to the CSU learning and teaching environment. The CSUEDs brought together

stories of innovation that had been fostered through distributive and delegated leadership, faculty scholarship, diffusion of innovation and networked learning. Two forms of leadership were evident in this case study - positional leadership and leadership as activity. Positional leadership is leadership associated with a “formal position of authority” and leadership as activity is leadership “viewed as a feature of the ...community in which individuals and groups (regardless of their role in the organisational hierarchy) assume responsibility for some aspects” of the organisation’s life (italics in original, Townsend & MacBeath, 2011, p.144).

Each CSU began with a plenary that typically involved an international Key Note speaker, followed by a panel of CSU senior managers presenting information about the CSU strategic directions related to learning and teaching. For example, in 2010, Educating for 2020 and Beyond the Keynote Speakers were Professor Jeannie Herbert, Day 1 of the conference began with a Welcome to Country, on this occasion by Aunty Gloria & Uncle Ralph Naden. The Conference was then opened by Associate Professor Marian Tulloch (Executive Director of the Division of Learning and Teaching) followed by the Key-note by Professor Jeannie Herbert. Foundation Chair of Indigenous Studies, Charles Sturt University. Day 3 began with a key-note address by Professor Ron Barnett, Emeritus Professor of Higher Education, Institute of Education, University of London, UK. After a break on Day 3 Professor Barnett’s keynote was followed by a Moderated Q&A and panel discussion including Dr Wendy Nolan, Dr Elaine Duffy, Dr Marian Tulloch, and Dr Jane Mills (Chair). The formal leadership that characterised the start of the CSUEDs also acted as their bookends. For example, at the end of CSUED2010, Professor Barnett ended by “Reflecting on CSUED 2010” in a panel of senior CSU staff involved in learning and teaching innovation, and was closed by Dr Tulloch. The CSUED programs did not provide sufficient information to enable clear conclusions to be made concerning the frequency or otherwise of positional leaders giving papers/workshops that demonstrated their leadership in learning and teaching as an activity. It was clear that positional leaders gave key-note addresses and were involved in plenary sessions; it was less clear that the professoriate played a role in presenting their work through papers/workshops, although the exception was EFPI, the FLI and LTS - senior staff gave papers/workshops at each CSUED.

Each CSUED invited the CSU community to share innovative practices. Some insights concerning this process can be drawn from survey data by those who presented at two or more CSUEDs 2008-2010 (n=35). In this limited sample, respondents were motivated to present at the CSUEDs for the following reasons:

- I wanted to share my innovation with colleagues. 33.3%
- I wanted to show leadership. 11.1%
- I wanted to inspire others. 33.3%
- I wanted to advocate a certain approach to learning and teaching. 22.2% [CSUED Survey Monkey, 2011].

Respondents to the survey were asked if the ideas or innovations they had presented at the CSUEDs had been adopted by colleagues. One respondent indicated to a large extent, one responded to a very small extent, and the remainder (n=7) indicated that their ideas had

somewhat been adopted by colleagues. The following additional comments were given as examples:

- The Course-wide adoption of ePortfolios within the Faculty has expanded from the [name of course] ... to the revision of [a Masters program], where ePortfolio will be embedded in the two new compulsory subjects - beginning and capstone, and I am part of the writing of these subject.
- More will come once we have these two projects rolled out next year
- I was contacted by Educational Designers and a colleague took up a teaching fellowship on this topic
- All the sorts of things I talk about are in the process of being developed to some extent... Educational technology is always evolving and it helps staff to see others actually doing it!
- There's more 'talk' about planning to do this, rather than doing it [CSUED Survey Monkey, 2011].

Respondents were asked if the ideas or innovations they presented at the CSUEDs had influenced how a subject or a course was taught. Respondents were also asked if their ideas or innovations had a School-wide or a Faculty-wide influence. Informants agreed that "CSUED provided me with an opportunity to collaborate with a team":

- To a large extent 50.0%
- Somewhat 37.5%
- To a very small extent 12.5%
- Further insights [CSUED Survey Monkey, 2011].

One respondent noted that, in terms of exerting influence of emerging learning and teaching practice, in terms of ideas they presented at CSUD, that this could be achieved "as part of one's daily role, with colleagues-developing workshops, inputting into strategic discussions in schools and divisions" in the following ways:

- As part of a Webinar series on Online Assessment
- I have presented them at an Exemplar session in my school
- Within my School - L&T Committee.
- online discussions workshops in supervisory capacity
- In school seminars and L&T committee meetings, FLI meetings, technology committee, TERPA, Flexible Learning Committee.
- Through chatting with people mostly. Informal networks within CSU [R1: Survey Monkey].

Analysis of the CSUED programs (2008-2010) indicated that the CSUEDs provided an opportunity to CSU staff to represent practice with peers through the rituals of papers, workshops and posters. Leadership was a conversational activity - relational in the sense meant by Eriksen & Cunliffe (2010, p. 98) when they proposed that “leading is an embodied and relational activity, embedded within ... everyday interactions and conversations”. The CSUEDs provided CSU with conversational episodes in a complex and ongoing narrative about learning and teaching at CSU emergent from the intersections of positional and activity based leaderships, at CSUED, but importantly, linked to multiple acts and conversations elsewhere. The web of “embodied and relational activity” that leads CSU staff to attend and present at the CSUEDs requires further study. It seems reasonable to speculate that a wide variety of leadership approaches, strategies and tasks underpinned this complex and emerging web.

# Acknowledgements

The CSUED Conferences are the productive outcome of many at Charles Sturt University. CSUED details, as well as Programs can be found at <[csued.wildapricot.org/](http://csued.wildapricot.org/)>

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# The Introduction of an ePortfolio Tool

*Carole Hunter*

## Background

This case study was developed by the author drawing on previous studies (Hunter 2007, Hunter 2009, Hunter & Uys 2009, Hunter & Stewart 2010) supplemented with data derived from a questionnaire and 1:1 interviews using an impact map approach.

Charles Sturt University (CSU) adopted PebblePad as its university-wide personal learning/ePortfolio platform in February 2009, with the aim of establishing a university-wide culture around personal learning that promoted self-management and ownership. This initiative was in response to identified drivers for the use of ePortfolios at CSU, which included:

- CSU's key objective of being a leader in the provision of excellence in education for the professions, and the associated need for a tool that supports the development of professional and lifelong learning skills such as self-appraisal, reflexivity and self-directed learning, as well as the presentation of those skills to others;
- The need to develop improved and varied assessment strategies, including those for the online environment and those that support the development of graduate attributes;
- A growing interest and demand for an ePortfolio tool from CSU staff, in particular academics from the Faculties of Education, Arts and Science, as well as staff in Careers Services, to support key learning outcomes and employer requirements;
- An increasing need to highlight and make explicit the generic skills required of a CSU graduate; and
- An increasing need for students to have a place to record, monitor and reflect on their achievements.

A needs analysis (Hunter, 2007) had been conducted previously with key stakeholders, and this was used to identify academics that were already using portfolios (paper- or web-based) in a positive and meaningful way with their students, were enthusiastic about using new technologies to support this work and were willing to share their knowledge, experience and resources with their peers.

While CSU's ePortfolio Project team first piloted the Open Source Portfolio due to its strong linkages with the University's learning management system, a series of internal reports in mid-late 2008 saw the team investigating other ePortfolio systems that had a stronger focus on personal learning. This culminated in a move to PebblePad, which aligned more closely with stakeholder needs and highlighted ePortfolios as both a process of planning, organising, selecting, reflecting, and sharing and the product of that process—a narrated collection of artefacts showing the development of one's skills and capabilities.

The PebblePad implementation was a partially-devolved model based on viral professional development. This model draws from the popular definition of ‘viral’, whereby a technology, tool or teaching strategy is quickly spread from one person to another. The implementation team felt that this model suited the CSU climate at the time, including:

- Our limited centralized support resources and strong, distributed learning and teaching support enabled through school-based educational designers;
- The current climate at CSU, where both academics and students were dealing with multiple new (and often mandatory) initiatives, with an uneven willingness and capacity to take on new technologies; and
- Our desire for ownership of personal learning / ePortfolios to be driven by and lie firmly in the hands of the users, and for it not to become ‘just another institutional tool’ (Hunter & Stewart, 2010, p.450).

It allowed CSU to deliberately encourage and expect multiple levels of engagement depending on the academics’ own readiness and comfort zones. The implementation team focused on the academics who took part in the 2007 needs analysis, instead of using limited resources to engage those who were not ready to take on personal learning. It was felt that this offered a higher chance of early success, and could be used to nurture some early ‘champions’ in this area. A second implementation stage was designed to involve key non-teaching stakeholders such as Student Services, Human Resources, Library Services, Learning Skills and student bodies.

Two years following this implementation, the model offered an interesting opportunity to consider the impact and influences of the small group of early adopters that formed part of the initial rollout of ePortfolios at CSU. These early adopters show a complex array of impact, both strong and weak, forming into definite ‘spheres’ of influence as ePortfolios have diffused throughout the university. Their development as learning leaders, though they don’t necessarily identify themselves in this way, has been important in influencing the work of others, decision making and generating new ideas. Unexpected outcomes included the nurturing of student leaders, which has led to a thriving student ePortfolio community.

## Visions & Initial Targets

The initial aims of the implementation of ePortfolios at CSU, as determined through its ePortfolio Project, were to:

- Determine the current uses, problems and issues related to portfolio use within CSU;
- Learn from the experiences of other institutions regarding the implementation of ePortfolios in general, and the Sakai ePortfolio in particular (including benchmarking);
- Determine current and future academic and student needs in relation to ePortfolios, including training needs;



- Determine how the chosen ePortfolio tool might be best configured to meet these needs;
- Determine what is required to ensure successful implementation of ePortfolios on an institution-wide basis;
- Guide the mainstreaming of ePortfolios at CSU;
- Develop a strong understanding of the ePortfolio tool - from a functional and technical perspective;
- Nurture ePortfolio 'champions' within each Faculty;
- Create exemplars of the effective use of ePortfolios at CSU; and
- Recommend appropriate names at CSU for the ePortfolio suite of tools, individual tools and icons that are to be associated with each of these.

Various stakeholders had their own visions for the implementation of ePortfolios at CSU (Hunter, 2007). These ranged from supporting the development of professional and lifelong learning skills and improved and varied assessment strategies (Reference Group), developing integrated knowledge through course-based portfolios (Division of Learning and Teaching Services), a way to integrate careers and academic knowledge (Careers Services), raising awareness of graduate attributes (Marketing) and demonstrating information literacies (Library Services). Some Schools viewed portfolios as powerful learning tools enabling reflection, critique and a blending of informal and formal learning towards holistic achievements. Students were more focused on the portfolio as an archive or collection of artefacts...a place to electronically store all their work. They saw it largely for assessment purposes, but could also see its value for employment.

## Strategies & Activities

The partially devolved model incorporated a series of principles, synthesised below from the ePortfolio Rollout Plan (Hunter & Uys, 2009):

- Academics learn to use the technology in their own context with support from the ePortfolio team, Educational Designers and each other.
- Focus on early adopters who are enthusiastic and willing to share their knowledge, experience, and materials rather than on those who aren't in the 'ePortfolio headspace' - they need to see success from their peers first.
- Workshops are only one component of the program - not the foundation.
- Continue to nurture our community of ePortfolio users through a strong network and seed the network with short pieces of relevant content that can have an instant effect.
- Share everything and celebrate every success.

- Expect multiple levels of engagement and keep users active within their comfort zone.
- Don't let enthusiasm for the tools get in the way of enhancing learning.
- Iteratively evaluate the program. After a few months, the ePortfolio team should be contributing less and EDs/academics more.

A series of 'key messages' were also developed as part of a Communication plan (Hunter, 2009). These included establishing a common language around ePortfolios as a process rather than only a product, personal ownership and management of one's professional identity, iterative and multiple development approaches, and development of lifelong learning skills. These messages were reinforced through professional development approaches, documentation, support resources and all communications.

Academics were supported in their own context, by school-based educational designers and the ePortfolio Project team, as well as a support sites that focused on the key messages, resources and networking opportunities. It was hoped that early adopters would then share their ideas and successes with others, forming a 'ripple effect' throughout the university community and building agency. Students were also supported through a support site and forum, and help desk staff trained to answer technical questions.

At the same time, the ePortfolio team recognised that students needed to see personal learning as something that also occurred outside of formalised course work. Thus, the Career Development Officers also embedded personal learning / ePortfolio concepts and tools into their various conversations with students. Thus, forming from this strategy was a commitment to 'shared leadership', where multiple areas of the university were encouraged to take on leadership of different aspects of the ePortfolio implementation.

## Outcomes

In terms of sheer numbers, clearly usage has increased, though not exponentially. There has been a definite although perhaps subtle change in the way portfolios are being used. For example, many academics are now using PebblePad for content creation around academic skills, problem-based learning, project documentation as well as the development of case studies and webquests. There are also increasing numbers of academics using PebblePad for their own performance management, as well as a limited number of applications for Fellowships, Awards and Promotions. While the emphasis in 2007 was on the career- or practicum-focused showcase portfolio, in 2011, it seems to have swung more towards the reflective / learning portfolio. Overall, there's a much more diverse use of the ePortfolio / personal learning tool, which is perhaps driven at least partly by the flexibility of the tool itself.

A diverse range of course disciplines have now integrated PebblePad into the curriculum following the success of our early adopters. A key leader has been the BEd (Early Childhood and Primary) course, in which students use PebblePad throughout their degree to reflect on prior, course and work-based experiences, create rich evidence-based webfolios in curriculum areas and use profiles to track their development against professional standards. Academics have noted significant increases in deep learning, as well as improved confidence, independence and

responsibility towards learning. It has also encouraged academics to provide more formative feedback (Munday, 2010). Other disciplines are following in their footsteps, including Policing, Business, Nursing and Agriculture.

Smaller initiatives are occurring in a wide range of individual subjects. For example, in the Faculty of Science, physiotherapy students are using the blog tool to reflect on videos of themselves in simulated client consultations in preparation for their clinical placement. In another subject, PebblePad allows the academic to provide rich, dialogic feedback as students build skills in developing and justifying climate change arguments based on scientific evidence. Speech pathology students are using webfolios to more effectively and efficiently demonstrate their practical skills through audio and video files (Clark & Hardham, 2010), while nursing students are using blogs to reflect on various aspects of their transition from school/work to university. Individual successes are encouraging wider sharing with peers, with showcases now being initiated and conducted within individual Schools.

Although not all initiatives have gone as smoothly as they may have if a more 'controlled' approach had been taken, the advantages in enhanced ownership and more widespread innovation have far outweighed any 'mistakes', which are also providing useful feedback for future iterations.

A small number of students have taken on a very strong leadership role throughout the implementation, helping drive its usage among their uninitiated peers and academics. This has involved taking on the role of volunteer mentor both in subjects and in the PebblePad student forum, which itself was initiated as a result of a student suggestion. One student reported that the mentoring process helped them to both increase their knowledge of PebblePad and to regularly review and reflect on their own personal learning process. The sharing of this personal experience and knowledge, but more importantly, enthusiasm towards personal learning helps other students to become involved, relieve frustrations and start sharing their own work, so that success breeds success. The unexpected success of these emerging, voluntary mentors has led to a number of courses deliberately encouraging mentoring between students.

## Challenges / Limitations

The process of trialing, choosing and then implementing the ePortfolio tool took some years, as a complex process and involved a change between two different systems as the implementation team strived to find a balance between meeting stakeholder needs and institutional requirements. Only some of this process has been described in this case study. Additional challenges for the case study were the assumption that 'early adopters' were learning leaders, and that the introduction of an ePortfolio tool in itself fosters the design of BFL, open and DE learning environments.

In addition, the case study itself contains a number of limitations, primarily:

- The limited number of respondents to the questionnaire (n=4)
- It's retrospective nature, in that we are fitting the case to the research question. The goal of the implementation wasn't to establish learning leaders, though the initial visions and aims did note the development of 'champions' within Faculties.

## Connections, Collegiality & Networks

An underlying premise in any viral or devolved approach is that connections, collegiality and networking will need to exist, and indeed flourish, for the approach to be effective. Of course, that won't be enough in itself, but without it, the approach will fail. Similarly, when we look for the development of learning leaders we should see strong connections, collegiality and networks developing within particular 'spheres of influence' (Levine, 1972).

In terms of collaboration within the ePortfolio system, by far the greatest amount of sharing is occurring via gateways, suggesting that these items are being shared for assessment purposes. Private and open shares are occurring less frequently, and comments are less than might be expected for the amount of items shared in total. Academics are certainly collaborating together on the design and embedding of ePortfolios within their courses, with at least 11 courses now explicitly embedding ePortfolios. In most cases, this has involved the academics working with their Educational Designers on preliminary workshops, mapping and the design of various learning experiences. In terms of publications, there is also some evidence that academics are working together to reflect on their work. Of the publications found, 65% were individual, 22% were presented by two authors, and 13% were created by 3 or more authors.

Resources, such as a 'Getting Started Guide' and an introductory tutorial have been developed by the early adopters and shared on the support site and adopted by other teams. Others have shared case studies of their work. However, these instances of collegiality are isolated and the research was not able to demonstrate that it was occurring more widely or had any bearing on learning leadership.

Of the internal support networks, only the student support forum continues to attract large numbers of posts and reads (Stewart & Hunter, 2011; Stewart & Haddad, 2012). Since its inception in February 2010, the forum has seen 1131 posts with 237,847 distinct reads and 4926 users reading one message or more. The number of distinct reads of each post ranges from 7 to 1151.

In order to identify the nature of collaboration and networks in operation in the uptake of ePortfolios at CSU, a number of impact maps were developed with selected users. More about these impact maps can be found in the electronic version of this case study. In summary; the impact maps demonstrated the range and strength of some of the connections and networks that have developed following the implementations of ePortfolios at CSU. There are definite spheres of influence, usually two or three core spheres for each early adopter. Influences come from within the ePortfolio project team, from colleagues, as well as from oneself (own studies, own knowledge base and educational frameworks).

From the limited data gained from the questionnaire, the respondents perceived a limited to medium level of influence on others in relation to ePortfolios. However there appear to be some discrepancies between this and the impact interviews, suggesting that those who completed the survey before the interview may not have been cognisant of their impact until reflecting on this through the mapping process.

Two thirds felt that their work with ePortfolios had influenced how a subject was being taught to a large or very large extent, while only one felt that they'd had a similar influence on how a course was being taught (most suggested they'd had a medium level of influence). Similarly, most felt that they'd had a low-medium influence on both their Schools and Faculty, with one exception who felt that their influence had been much stronger. All commented that their work with ePortfolios had improved the student learning experience, with half rating this to a large or very large extent.

## Reflective Practice & Practice Experimentation

Practice experimentation is a large part of any technology implementation, and the range of course and subject initiatives outlined previously indicate that much experimentation is happening at a variety of levels.

Staff members seem to be engaging in different levels of reflection, gradually refining their understanding of the many facets of ePortfolios and how they might be used in their own context. This is demonstrated in the Careers impact map and narrative, where the participant's understanding of ePortfolios developed through a series of internal and external events and interactions which helped him realise that the ePortfolio tool could be used to 'bridge the divide' between academic learning and the work of Careers Services, as well as his Masters in Education studies. This expanded his understanding of future-orientated assessment and lifelong learning.

However, although the trend is moving towards more learning portfolios, most uses with students still focus on the ePortfolio as a 'proving' tool to showcase student work, rather than as a learning tool. While the needs analysis highlighted that there may have been some misgivings about CSU's current use of portfolios in 2007, it also highlighted that much of the thinking of our early adopters was right on target with well-supported opinion about the potential of ePortfolios (e.g. as reviewed by Butler, 2006). For example, recurring themes from the needs analysis focussed on the need for integrity and value, a strong sense of purpose, ownership, holistic approaches that were inclusive of student's lives beyond formal learning, the importance of deep reflection, and the requirement for a wide range of support for underlying skills.

## Reflections on Learning Leadership

Townsend and MacBeath (2011) comment that the task of leading and managing an implementation and a curriculum change as large as ePortfolios present is too large for an individual or even a team. The data from this case study confirms that in the ePortfolio implementation, leadership has developed in a number of areas.

- **Positional leadership:** Two thirds of the questionnaire participants felt that they'd been influenced by members of the ePortfolio team, with one commenting that this had been the strongest influence on their developing understanding. Similarly, 5 of the 6 respondents noted that they had been influenced by their Educational Designer. Thus, the implementation seems to have provided a landscape for the ePortfolio team to influence others, sometimes significantly, and also to support current institutional positions of learning leadership, such as the Educational Designers.

- Leadership as activity: The ePortfolio implementation was part of a wider landscape of influence that allowed members of the CSU community - academics, support staff as well as students - to have a moderate level of breadth and depth of influence on others' understanding and use of ePortfolios. This leadership was one of opportunity (Townsend & MacBeath, 2011), with a focus on people, rather than outcomes.

While students were not part of this case study, it became clear through both the document analysis and insider knowledge that there had also been significant development of student leaders linked to the implementation of ePortfolios at CSU. At least three CSU students have presented at conferences and published in journals in relation to ePortfolios, one on multiple occasions. These students have also taken on the lead on the student forum, encouraging others as they begin their ePortfolio journey and assisting with common user issues.

In this sense, the implementation fostered a kind of 'leadership density' (Sergiovanni, 2001), with a number of community members involved in influencing the work of others, decision making and generating new ideas. These 'influencers' largely preferred to think of themselves as just that, instead of leaders in the formal sense, with one of the participants in the impact mapping preferring to think of herself as a change agent, as she has multiple professional roles, each of which has being a change agent at its core. For others, the reluctance to use the term leadership stemmed from a desire for a less formal, more equal power relationship, a desire to influence rather than be responsible for outcomes, and a discord between perceived uncertainties associated with learning and the definite knowledge which seemed to be expected of leaders.

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# The Teaching Fellowship Scheme

*Mike Keppell, Natasha Hard and Betsy Lyon*

## Background

This case explores the development and evolution the Teaching Fellowship Scheme (TFS) run by the Flexible Learning Institute at Charles Sturt University (CSU) between 2008 and 2012. As a major distance provider in Australia, CSU had historically relied upon a traditional print-based mode of delivering distance education. However, in response to the changing face of higher education, the university recognised the need to transform practice in distance and blended and flexible learning and teaching in order to provide equitable options for their diverse range of students (Keppell, O'Dwyer, Lyon, & Childs, 2010). In fact, Dolence and Norris (1995) argued that to survive this transition, organisations would be required to transform from being structured and process driven to “fast, flexible and fluid” (p.31).

Set against this backdrop, discussions about developing an Institute for Innovation in Flexible Learning and Teaching commenced in 2006, with the Flexible Learning Institute (FLI) established in 2007. The institute was funded through the office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) and had critical support of senior management (Scott, 2004). The institute was designed to enhance the quality of learning and teaching through overseeing, developing and fostering excellence and innovation in flexible and blended learning. This would be achieved through pedagogical scholarship, the promotion of good practice and policy advice.

One of the key projects developed by the FLI was the Teaching Fellowship Scheme (TFS). The Scheme was developed in response to a changing educational context characterised by the commercialisation and globalisation of education, increasing numbers and diversity of students, changes in student expectations and an increased focus on accountability (Scott, Coates, & Anderson, 2008; Oblinger & Oblinger, 2005). The Teaching Fellowship Scheme was initially inspired by a previous development based research project undertaken by the Director of the FLI at the Centre for Learning, Teaching and Technology at the Hong Kong Institute of Education (Reeves, 2000, p. 7).

This case study examines the FLI Fellowships conducted since July 2008 when the first eight Fellows were accepted into the program.

## Visions & Initial Targets

The FLI was originally developed to promote innovation, transform educational practice in flexible and blended learning and teaching, foster research-based teaching and develop applied research outputs relevant to innovation and assist in addressing priority educational issues linked to these objectives (Keppell et al., 2010). The review of curriculum and learning development, course and subject redesign and the development and evaluation of learning tools/strategies and management programs were all considered important areas to address. Building on these foci of the FLI, and the CSU strategies around the transformation of learning and teaching, the Scheme was intended to encourage Fellows to engage in projects relevant

to their practice, and with a focus on professional development and reflection, promoting authentic and transformative learning.

The scheme aimed to transform learning and teaching by working with individual academics from across all disciplines, to adopt a more blended and flexible approach. The design of the Fellowship Scheme was also intended to provide significant benefits to the Fellows in terms of career development, given the enhanced opportunity for research output and for a discipline specific investment in the scholarship of teaching and learning. Designed to align with the work by Lefoe, Parrish, Hart, Smigiel, and Pannan (2008) in developing the Leadership Capacity Development Framework (LCDF), the scheme supported Fellows through mentoring, providing opportunities to present and publish work, increased academic recognition, and the development of a community of practice centred on blended and flexible practice.

The Scheme sought to position the Fellows as change agents able to initiate pedagogical change within their disciplines through providing examples of good practice and involving other staff in their projects. By keeping Fellows as active members within their schools, the Scheme hoped to facilitate organisational transformation as an “organizational learning process extends incrementally across all levels of the organization, from the individual staff member to groups” (Roche, 2001, p. 121). This distributed model also intended to influence the change process at CSU based on the assumption that this process would provide a natural accrual of benefit to schools, faculties and the university. As such, the Scheme sought to include Fellows from all 26 schools at the university.

The facilitation of collaborative professional relationships between the Flexible Learning Institute and various schools and faculties was also a critical component of the Scheme’s design. The developers of the scheme envisioned it as a “powerful conduit for the sharing of knowledge, skills and information within and between schools and an enabling strategy for the development of communities of practice across the university as a whole” (Keppell et al., 2010, p. 166). One of these key relationships was with Learning and Teaching Services (LTS), which was encouraged through the pairing of all Fellows with an Educational Designer to work with them on their project.

## Strategies & Activities

### Structure

The Scheme though originally developed and implemented by the Director of FLI with the assistance of a part-time research assistant; however, has developed to now employ a Strategic Projects Officer responsible for the day-to-day management of the scheme. This Officer supports the progression of the Fellows’ projects, assists Fellows in clarifying necessary tasks, fosters connections between Educational Designers (EDs) and Fellows and others, and resolves issues as required. This change in structure has allowed a clearer separation of the Fellowships and the overarching research being conducted by the Director.

Practically, the Scheme funds Fellows a total of \$40,000 for twelve months (occasionally \$20,000 for six months) to buy out 50% of their teaching time to identify and focus on an idea relating to the possibilities of flexible delivery within their teaching area. Whilst funding a 100%

buyout of teaching time for six months was discussed, this meant that schools and Faculties would face increased difficulties in replacing quality teaching academics, and the continued collegial engagement fostered by the 50% buyout was intended to promote collaboration between the Fellows, FLI, schools and faculties. This approach also intended to provide an opportunity for situated and transformative learning to occur (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Fellows could simultaneously call upon their Fellowship activities to enhance their teaching and at the same time, have their Fellowship informed by their teaching practice.

## Recruitment

Fellows were recruited using an online process and to assist in selecting academics eligible for Fellowship appointments, the following criteria were developed (Flexible Learning Institute, 2009, p. 14):

- The Fellows should be, or have the capacity to become, highly motivated change agents in flexible learning and teaching within the school
- The Fellow should be working or interacting with at least 30% of academic staff within their school
- Their design based research proposal should involve the scholarship of teaching and learning and have the potential to introduce innovative pedagogical change to a course/subject within their own school
- The subjects or courses affected would ideally be identified as high priority areas by the Head of School and Director of FLI
- Applicants must have the approval of their Head of School, with schools supporting the Fellow's participation through time release and support of travel costs.

## Communication

Participating Fellows have come from across six different campuses at CSU. This disparate model of operating and communicating (which is common to CSU) requires the Scheme to operate using a mixture of digital, online and face-to-face communications and media to operate effectively and equitably. Fellowships do, however, commence with a face-to face welcome and orientation workshop which aims to orientate the Fellows to the goals and activities of FLI, establish connections between the Fellows and FLI staff, share projects, goals and plans and build on original proposals.

Ongoing communication between the Fellows and FLI staff is based upon a range of media and digital networking tools including:

- Interact, the CSU Information Management and Digital Repository (built on the Sakai platform).
- Online Meeting tool (Wimba), which is used to conduct the 59mins@FLI webinar sessions.

- Pebblepad, a Personal Learning Space that is used by both the Strategic Projects Officer and the Fellows themselves for a range of activities and information.
- Twitter@FLINews, for sharing new ‘finds’ and ideas from key people in the blended learning world.
- Delicious, an online social bookmarking site where BFL resources are collated.
- Skype, for mentoring meetings between the Strategic Projects Officer and the Fellows.

## Mentoring

A key strategy of the Fellowship program has been to provide mentoring for Fellows through a range of processes including:

- Face-to-face meetings. In 2011 the Strategic Projects Officer met face-to-face with the Fellows on an average of two occasions during the year related specifically to the development of their individual projects.
- Conversations and meetings via a range of social media and web communications mechanisms (such as those listed above), Bridgit (CSU’s data conferencing software), email and phone are all conducted as needed by individual Fellows.
- The orientation workshop provides a chance to establish relationships between Fellows and the relevant FLI staff, share projects and discuss FLI and leadership in a face-to-face setting.
- Other mentoring also occurs less formally through the research interviews with the Director.

## Research

The Fellowship scheme sought to foster research-based teaching and develop applied research outputs relevant to innovation in flexible learning and teaching. In response to this, Fellows have been required to conduct research as part of their Fellowship projects. The findings and outcomes of these projects have also been required to be disseminated through the publication of a book chapter or journal article, presentation/s at the CSUEd conference (internal learning and teaching conference), as well as other presentations both internal and external to CSU. Fellows are also invited to contribute to the research being conducted by the Director on the Scheme itself. This initially explored the notion of transformative learning relating to the introduction of blended and flexible learning across CSU. However, since its inception there has been a change of focus driven by the increasing recognition of Fellows as leaders in the CSU community, their schools and across the university. Thus, the research evolved to reflect this change and now focuses on distributive leadership.

## Outcomes

Identifying explicit outcomes of the Scheme is difficult due to the complex interplay of factors involved in determining causality. The outcomes of individual Fellows could take the form of the artefacts they themselves developed, the learning and knowledge through this process, their interactions or influence with peers, the publications and presentations derived from Fellowship activities and/or their career progression post-Fellowship. After three and a half years of operation and four cohorts of Teaching Fellows across six CSU campuses, the Teaching Fellowship Scheme continues to be funded through the Office of the Deputy-Vice Chancellor Academic. During this period (2008-2011), the scheme has seconded a total of 24 academics as Teaching Fellows from 17 schools.

Drawing upon data collected as part of the Director's research into Transformative Learning, Keppell et al. (2010, p. 170-171) identified six predominant themes and impacts evident in the perceptions of the Teaching Fellows:

1. **An enhanced understanding of pedagogy and of their own pedagogical approach**
2. **An increased capacity and willingness to reflect upon their own practice**
3. **A willingness to think critically about received ideas and conventional approaches**
4. **Being empowered to negotiate technological and institutional barriers to change**
5. **Preparedness to maximise the time/space opportunity of the Fellowship to actively engage in meaningful and relevant activities for their individual context**
6. **Equity and access.**

A range of artefacts have been developed by the Fellows including virtual tutorials, interactive teaching resources, simulations as well as a range of different blended and flexible teaching approaches. In 2011, there was also an increased focus on promoting the activities of the Fellows and FLI in light of the implementation of changes to learning and teaching at CSU. To supplement these changes the Strategic Projects Officer, developed key resources including a DVD titled 'Exploring good practice in blended and flexible learning at CSU: The practitioner's voice', and individual Case Studies of Teaching Fellows from 2011. These digital resources are based on video footage of Fellows' presentations and interviews, as well as insights provided by the FLI Team providing real examples of blended and flexible learning practice. Moreover, in accordance with their Fellowship requirements, Fellows have produced numerous publications and presentations on their Fellowship activities at the annual CSUEd conference as well as at national and international conferences and events.

Many Teaching Fellows have gone on to gain recognition for their skills and leadership capabilities in receiving awards or being appointed to formal leadership roles. For example; two Fellows have been appointed Course Directors, one as Sub Dean: Learning and Teaching, two have received the CSU Vice-Chancellor's Awards for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, two others

have been awarded ALTC Citations for Outstanding Contribution to Student Learning and one received the Vice-Chancellors Award for Excellence in Sustainability.

## Challenges / Limitations

Drawing upon published materials and the tacit knowledge held by the researchers, a range of challenges and limitations faced by the individual Teaching Fellows as well as by the Scheme itself were identified.

Individual challenges faced by Teaching Fellows included time management skills, change overload, ensuring appropriate workloads, increasing casualisation excluding academics from participating, lack of institutional support for new technologies, rigidity around modes of study (no blended mode), and the presence of discipline-specific cultures.

The key challenges and limitations faced by the Teaching Fellowship Scheme included:

- Difficulties in backfilling the positions vacated by Fellows.
- Issues around how different schools understand the 50% buy-out of teaching, related time allowances and intended use for the funding.
- Lack of understanding surrounding Teaching Fellowship requirements and their funding arrangements as opposed to Research Fellowships.
- Limited staffing in the Flexible Learning Institute to support the scheme.
- Competition with other fellowships and research grants such as RIPPLE and the Collaborative Research Networks (CRN) program.
- A loss of quality teachers when academics are rewarded for good practice by being moved into non-teaching positions or into positions outside the university.
- Differences in school cultures, understandings and expectations regarding BFL and the importance of participating in schemes such as the Teaching Fellowship Scheme.
- Ongoing Interact Site development.
- Challenges with online/on campus blending (systems).
- Ongoing funding/sustainability of the Scheme due to an annual funding process.



## Connections, Collegiality & Networks

The Scheme provides a chance for Fellows to consider the concepts of communities of practice and peer-learning as advocated by Boud (1999, p. 6) who suggested that reciprocal peer learning should include:

- Participants collaborating with each other within a learning community.
- Participants reflecting on their professional practice using peer-learning.
- Participants applying their knowledge within their own discipline in which like-minded peers provide constructive feedback and support.
- Participants taking collective responsibility for identifying their own learning needs.

Specific initiatives and activities that sought to foster connections, collegiality and networks in the TFS included:

- 59min@FLI; an interactive webinar which takes place every four weeks, involving past and present Fellows;
- Communications through the FLI media channels (Twitter, Interact, and blog).
- Presentations, meetings and discussions at the CSUEd annual conferences by Fellows and FLI staff (formal and informal).
- Discussions between the Strategic Projects Officer and the Teaching Fellows.
- Presentations and publications nationally and internationally.
- Initial Welcome and Orientation Workshop for Fellows.
- Mentoring meetings with the Strategic Project Officer.
- Annual social function during CSUEd.
- Attention focused on the aspects of 'connection' in research interviews with the director.

Indicators of connections, collegiality and networks could include:

- Enduring relationships between fellows and with FLI staff developed during the Fellowship.
- Fellows being acknowledged as a 'go to person' within schools (informed other) and providing support for peers.
- Increased use and understanding of the role of Learning and Teaching Services (LTS) and EDs.

- The following behaviours may indicate the presence of a community of practice based on (Wenger, 1998) perceptions of learning as social participation in communities and organisations:
  1. The willingness of Fellows and FLI staff to participate in and contribute to activities such as the 59mins@FLI webinars.
  2. Attendance at voluntary social events within the TFS Community.
  3. Fellows expressed their thoughts about the importance and benefit of building such connections in the 2009 Flexible Learning Institute's Teaching Fellowship Scheme Project Report.

## Reflective Practice & Practice Experimentation

Reflective practice and practice experimentation play a central role in the Teaching Fellowships. As noted by many of the Fellows, the Fellowships provide the time and space for them to step back from their day-to-day activities and engage in an iterative process of reflection and experimentation, overcoming what Taylor (1994) referred to as the 'tyranny of proximity'. For example, one Fellow (2008) noted that "... this has been the value of the FLI Fellowship for me - resources, time and headspace to actually be brave to try something new" (Flexible Learning Institute, 2009, p. 1).

The Director's own research, running in parallel to the Fellowships, is intended to encourage Fellows to engage in reflective practice, with the Director using the staged interviews (pre, mid & post) to query their position and thoughts about blended and flexible learning and teaching. Feedback from the Fellows saw the introduction of an additional 6 month post completion reflective interview which enabled better understandings the outcomes and impact of the project. Questions asked during these interviews included; how the project outcome impacted on teaching practice and/or philosophy; and whether being involved in a Fellowship initiated new ideas or pathways, and changed ideas of blended and flexible learning?

During 2008-2011, reflective practice was also supported by a number of other initiatives including:

- Mentoring activities and reflective conversations with FLI staff and other Fellows.
- A reflective journal was trialed in first round of Fellowships, however, it deemed impractical due to the time demands it placed on the Director in responding to these reflections and was thus discontinued.
- 59mins@FLI encourages Fellows to articulate their projects and their progress, and also asks for feedback from the audience.
- Publications and presentations such as those conducted at the DEHub Summit in February 2011, the annual CSUEd or for any other national or international event or journal.
- The production of individual case study videos and "The practitioner's voice" DVD afforded Fellows an opportunity to reflect upon their experiences as they were called to articulate their experiences and thoughts to the broad CSU community.

## Reflections on Learning Leadership

The Teaching Fellowship Scheme is based on a Faculty-Scholar model of fostering change and innovation. Through providing time, resources and support, the FLI provides a platform for Fellows to successfully develop action-learning projects that influence their practice and the practice of colleagues. Leadership has not been a core component of this scheme, with no formal link between engagement in the scheme and career progression or even career status. The scheme has, however, focused on building academic capacity and initiating change through innovative practice, development of good pedagogy, mentoring, promoting of self-reflection and engaging in a community of like-minded others.

The increasing recognition of Fellows as leaders evidenced in their appointment to formal leadership roles, however, promotes the idea that the Scheme builds the leadership capacity of Fellows. In fact, elements of the TFS parallel the Leadership Capacity Development Framework (LCDF) developed by Lefoe, et al. (2008) that focuses on growing, reflecting, enabling, engaging and networking. Some of the critical aspects of building leadership capacity in their study (as noted by the scholars) were similar to those found in the TFS and these include (Lefoe et al., 2008, p.1-2):

- The provision of authentic learning activities situated in real contexts such as the faculty-based projects they engaged in.
- Access to strategic mentoring and coaching to assist in consolidating understanding.
- Engagement in reflective practice.

Lefoe et al. (2008) also noted the necessity of a willingness and desire on the part of the leader for successful leadership capacity development. This is important to consider in light of the self-nominating style of recruitment for Fellows which may indicate an inherent interest in development and/or leadership etc. on behalf of the Fellow. It does simultaneously question the degree to which the Scheme develops or supports leadership or leaders? This is strongly shaped by the way one defines leadership; for as noted by (Stogdill, 1974, p. 258) “there are almost as many definitions of leadership as there are persons who have attempted to define the concept”. The traditional model of academic leadership may often be characterised by individual academic achievement and to some degree a responsibility for the academic development of others through such practices as research student supervision, however, this model has become increasingly criticised (Rowley, 1997). Thus, how one sees or defines leadership, and specifically, academic leadership, will affect the way they perceive the Teaching Fellowship Scheme and its ability to foster ‘leadership’.

Learning Leadership in this context is understood to be:


1. **A strategy where the TFS provides the time and space to implement and reflect; an iterative process of learning for those involved.**
2. **A bottom up strategy supported by senior management and aligned with CSU strategic directions sees the strategy supported across many levels of the institution.**

3. The fostering of a community of practice, through relationships with EDs, FLI staff, Fellows and others that encourages innovative research and practice in BFL.
4. Fellows demonstrating a willingness to collaborate, support and share practice.
5. The TFS providing opportunities for the development of skills and expertise that is recognised and accessed by peers.
6. The TFS supporting Fellows to have the confidence to take risks and experiment with something new.
7. Fellows demonstrating a willingness to engage in external activities and relationships, nationally and internationally.

In practice, the Teaching Fellowship Scheme adheres to the design principles for transformative learning defined as a process by which previously uncritically assimilated assumptions, beliefs, values and perspectives are questioned and thereby become more open, permeable and better justified (Cranton, 2006, p. vi). The scheme is working to establish intersecting and collaborative communities of reflection and inquiry throughout the university, enabling the development of technological and pedagogical skills through a distributive leadership approach.

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# Streaming Down from the Top: Implementing a New Learning Management System in a College of Business

*Mark Brown & Helen Hughes*

## Background

The College of Business is Massey University's largest College with more than 10,000 students located across four campuses: Albany, Manawatu, Wellington and Distance. The adoption of Massey's new Learning Management System (aka Stream) in the College of Business was part of a university-wide project with a budget of NZ\$4.5 million that was approved by the Senior Leadership Team including the relevant Pro-Vice Chancellor. While the project to implement Stream adopted a staged approach over three years, the eight core first year papers comprising the Bachelor of Business Studies (BBS) were required to move from WebCT to Stream by the start of the first semester in 2009.

In 2008, the BBS Programme had undergone redesign as part of the AACSB accreditation process. In this context, the accreditation process provided a catalyst for greater constructive alignment between assessment, learning outcomes and the graduate profile. Notably, the graduate attributes of the programme were also revised to recognise the importance of producing graduates with sufficient digital literacy for today's business environment. Thus, the implementation of Stream occurred in the foundation year of a degree programme with a certain level of 'readiness' for new ways of teaching, learning and assessment.

Given the timeframe for implementing Stream in the eight first year papers (units) was less than four months, academics teaching in the programme experienced significant pressure. In turn, this created pressure on centralized support services who worked above and beyond expectations to ensure the implementation of Stream was successful. In the wider context of the College and University at large, from a reputation and change management perspective, it was crucial that staff and students had a positive experience of Stream.

## Visions & Initial Targets

[The University's Road to 2020 Strategy](#) (Massey University, 2009) set a big goal for teaching and learning of providing all students with an exceptional and distinctive learning experience. Part of this experience was a commitment to exploiting the potential and making greater use of new digital media in the design and delivery of papers (units) on a programme-wide basis. The adoption of Stream as the University's new Learning Management System was aligned with this goal. The business case for the Stream Project identified three strategic drivers:

- To respond to the challenge of the so-called Google Generation;
- To enhance the quality of teaching and thereby maintain Massey's University pre-eminent status as a flexible learning and distance education provider;
- To introduce a new blended model of teaching that increases the level of student engagement and provides a learning experience relevant to the requirements of today's Knowledge Society. (Brown, Paewai & Suddaby, 2010).



These drivers and the Road to 2020 Strategy explicitly influenced the decision to adopt Stream at relatively short notice in the eight core first year papers (units) comprising the Bachelor of Business Studies (BBS) during the first semester of 2009. The initial targets for the adoption of Stream included:

- To ensure that the College of Business responds to the central university strategy to exploit the potential of new digital media.
- To ensure that Stream is used in and integrated throughout all eight papers (units) in the first year of the Bachelor of Business Studies (BBS).
- To assist the BBS Programme to be more equivalent across the four campuses: Albany, Manawatu, Wellington and by Distance.
- To ensure that digital literacy became a critical component for Business graduates through how and what they study.
- To build the momentum and establish ‘cascading demand’ for wider implementation of Stream from first year students as they moved onwards through subsequent years in the College of Business.
- To become a beacon or exemplar of Stream implementation in the College of Business that could be used as a springboard for the remainder of the College and across the University over the three-year life of the Stream Project.

## Strategies & Activities

A key strategy was the decision to adopt a distinctive brand for Massey University’s new online learning environment. After reviewing a shortlist of options developed by an external agency, ‘Stream’ was announced in January 2009 as the name of the University’s new platform to support online learning and teaching.

One of the first challenges for central support units responsible for implementing Stream was to establish alliances and relationships with key staff and opinion leaders in Colleges. A full-time Project Manager played a key role in this regard along with the Director of Distance Education who had responsibility for overseeing the Stream Project. Together, they sought to develop a close working relationship with the Pro-Vice Chancellor whom after initial caution was fully supportive of the College of Business leading in the University’s implementation of Stream. Indeed, the task of ‘getting everyone online’ as soon as possible became a major part of the College of Business reform strategy coupled with other developments.

An initial communication strategy was to share the University’s vision and rationale for adopting a new Learning Management System at staff fora on the Albany, Manawatu and Wellington campuses. In these for a, the ‘bigger picture’ of the growth of online learning was presented along with mock-ups of Stream to illustrate what the new environment would look like. The strategy here was to build support for the innovation from a change management perspective.

At a grass-roots level, the Coordinator of the first year Bachelor of Business Studies (BBS) was an important ‘opinion leader’, despite not having line management responsibility. In spite of

not being particularly digitally savvy, the BBS Coordinator understood the importance of Stream adoption and assumed the role of disseminating the vision and managing the implementation of Stream in a more palatable and realistic way.

The BBS Coordinator worked closely with the central Stream Project Team whose role was to maintain alignment with the centralized university vision and to support staff and consider risk mitigation in the face of the intense pressure to meet the implementation deadline of Semester One in 2009. In addition, the Stream Project Manager and related central service staff played a brokering role, which was to assist in bringing together early adopters.

A key part of the implementation strategy and business case for the adoption of Stream was the appointment of several new Flexible Teaching & Learning Consultants. Across the University, six new positions were established to go with several existing positions to support academic staff using a 'hub and spoke' model, which involved consultants being embedded 80% of their time in Colleges with line management retained by the centre. These consultants and the employment of an Online Developer in a contract role to undertake more technical migration work were crucial in helping staff to meet initial deadlines.

In addition to ongoing evaluation and normal University quality assurance processes, the concluding activity in Phase One was a formal staff and student evaluation. In September 2009, an online survey was circulated to all first year students enrolled in the BBS Programme and this was followed up with a staff survey in June 2010. Evaluation was deemed important to learn the lessons from the "BBS experience" and validate the efforts of staff over such a short implementation timeframe. Towards the end of 2010, a special bank of questions about online learning was also included in the University's use of AUSSE.

## Outcomes

Many of the initial targets were achieved over the first phase of implementation. First and foremost, the eight core first year papers (units) of the Bachelor of Business Studies (BBS) all achieved the goal of Stream adoption over 2009. There was more consistency and equivalence across campuses and delivery modes as some of the papers (units) opted to combine students in the same online learning environment. That said, while the 'look and feel' of the online learning environments was more consistent across papers (units), due to a number of complex factors including the tight timeframe, different pedagogical orientations and different levels of prior skill and experience of teaching online, there were significant differences in the use of Stream. A number of staff embraced the range of new tools and features available to them by redesigning their courses and assessment tasks to support collaboration, interactivity, personalization and rich media; whereas other staff adopted a more traditional content-centred and additive model of online teaching. Arguably, the initial implementation of Stream was only moderately successful in achieving the deeper goal of providing an exceptional and distinctive learning experience for all students.

However, despite variations in course design and differing levels of staff engagement, a high level of student satisfaction (85%) was reported from initial survey data collected in September 2009. Subsequent surveys and evaluations of teaching report a similar pattern with consistently over 80% of students rating their experience of Stream as 'good' or 'very good'. In turn, there

is evidence of enhanced retention and completion rates for some first year papers (units), especially for distance students where in a few cases they are now higher than internal students, but no direct causal relationship can be drawn. In terms of responding to the central university strategy of exploiting the potential of new digital media, Stream adoption has resulted in a 75% reduction in printed study materials by 2011.

In terms of propelling the rest of the College of Business towards Stream adoption, 490 papers (units) had transitioned to Stream by 2010, with that number increasing by 32% to 650 papers in 2011. Additionally, there are now approximately 12,000 students in the College of Business who are routinely making use of Stream, although there is still considerable variability in the way staff design and students access the online learning environment.

## Challenges / Limitations

The initial challenge in the adoption of Stream in the College of Business was to generate sufficient enthusiasm for the project. Staff were already working under considerable pressure. A related challenge was managing expectations and the College's decision to implement Stream on such a large scale over a relatively short timeframe. The support of the Pro-Vice Chancellor was crucial, but this also meant that the implementation of Stream was associated with other changes taking place within the College. And the College timeframe for implementation did not mesh with the University's decision to adopt a softer, more organic strategy over three years to support deeper cultural and pedagogical changes. As such, it was necessary for the College to trade on significant goodwill to achieve large-scale implementation across three campuses and four delivery modes, against an ambitious timeline.

Although the University had greatly increased support staff by employing new Flexible Teaching & Learning Consultants, they were still stretched to meet the university-wide demand and were often challenged to provide technical rather than deeper pedagogical level support. In many respects, due to the timeline, the immediate driver was to get staff online rather than make significant changes to their course design. Moreover, it was clear that there was a 'time and place' for pedagogical development that needed to better align with paper and programme reviews and competing pressures on staff to undertake research.

In part due to the ambitious timeline, the Staff Survey of June 2010 revealed a polarization among staff within the College of Business (Walker, Brown, Moore & Hughes, 2011a). While some staff reported that they took the opportunity to revise their pedagogy, others appeared to take the path of least resistance, which resulted in few significant changes to their course design. For example, staff were asked to respond to the statement, 'The implementation of Stream has helped me to think more deeply about my teaching and course design'. In response, 31% of respondents agreed, 38% felt neutral and 31% disagreed. As such, it could be argued that the original goal of implementing Stream was quantitatively achieved but may not have resulted in significant qualitative changes to the student learning experience. This point highlights the need for both numbers and narrative when interpreting student satisfaction data.

## Connections, Collegiality & Networks

First and foremost, this case study is testament to the scale of what can be achieved when institutional strategy and the positional leadership of senior staff is leveraged. In particular, the success of this project depended on the relationship that was established between the Project Manager, Director of Distance Education, Pro-Vice Chancellor and other important opinion leaders. This high-level communication channel was essential in helping to resolve problems and issues throughout the project but should not overshadow the important role that the Coordinator of the first year BBS Programme played as both a positional, relational and activity orientated leader.

At a mesa level an important collegial network emerged between the BBS Coordinator, heads of academic units and the Coordinator of the Flexible Teaching & Learning Consultants. All of these people and groups interfaced at different times with the positional leaders who had formal responsibility for the implementation of Stream. Thus, the connection between and across these two levels was crucial, but ultimately very little would have been achieved without this dialogue extending to those who actually had to do the work.

At a micro level, there is evidence of new connections forming between individual paper (unit) level coordinators across different departments and disciplines, brokered by the BBS Coordinator. The Staff Survey of June 2010 affirmed a strong sense of collegiality among academic staff whose reciprocal support was of great value. Respondents' qualitative comments acknowledged colleagues who, having already implemented Stream themselves, were approachable and readily available as a key point of support.

Finally, the Flexible Teaching & Learning Consultants were also a key resource for staff. The same survey indicated that the supportive role of the Consultants was an imperative, with 71% of respondents agreeing with the statement, 'I was well supported by central university services' during the implementation phase.

## Reflective Practice & Practice Experimentation

Reflection on the implementation of Stream has occurred at a number of levels. Institutionally, Massey University has continued to gather and monitor data on the use of Stream and findings have been consolidated in a number of reports that have been widely shared with staff and senior university leadership. For example, a small research team analysed the results of the Student Survey of September 2009 (Milne, Brown, Charbonneau & Macpherson, 2010) and the BBS Coordinator was the lead author of a report on the Staff Survey of June 2010 (Walker, Brown, Moore & Hughes, 2011a). Both reports were shared with the Pro-Vice Chancellor and College Executive and were circulated to all staff within the College of Business. They were also tabled and discussed at the University's Teaching and Learning Committee. A case study based on these reports has also been published as a conference paper at the ASCILITE conference in Hobart, December 2011 (Walker, Brown, Moore & Hughes, 2011b).

Several individual staff have been given presentations on their use of Stream, including sessions at the annual Vice-Chancellor's Symposium (November 2009) and during Teaching and Learning Week (September, 2010). The Stream experience has also been shared through conference

papers to relevant professional communities in the UK and US, including an overview of the initiative by the Pro-Vice Chancellor during the AACSB conference (e.g., Brown & Walker, 2011).

Finally, practice experimentation occurred in a large follow up project which piloted the use of online annotation software (A.nnotate) as part of the Stream, environment. This pilot was formally evaluated in two surveys in 2010 that sought to understand how students use learning resources and what they prefer in terms of printed and digital study resources (Argyle, Brown, Kendall, & Sandbrook, 2010; Brown, Argyle, Kendall & Sandbrook, 2011). Experimentation and innovations in teaching have also continued by individual staff in the College of Business as they have gone on to make widespread use online tests, electronic marking software and the use of digital audio and video, which is accessible through Stream.

## Reflections on Learning Leadership

Arguably, the ‘top-down’ decision to implement Stream in the College of Business over a short timeframe achieved more than would have been possible following a more organic approach relying on the readiness and willingness of individual staff. As such, the case illustrates that a major institutional change can be achieved when there is alignment between high-level institutional goals and senior positional leadership. In this case Massey University was serious about using Stream as a platform for exploiting the potential of new digital media and the Pro-Vice Chancellor interpreted this as an opportunity to build on a number of other transformations linked to the process of securing AACSB accreditation. Put simply, implementation of Stream over the initial implementation phase could not have been successfully achieved in the timeline without the leadership of the Pro-Vice Chancellor as a strategic advocate.

Having said that, the success of the initiative would have been seriously jeopardized had it not been for the key role of the Programme Coordinator and a handful of other opinion leaders who, through their vertical and horizontal networks, helped to mediate the top down message. In this respect, the role of the Coordinator of the first year BBS Programme needs to be understood in terms of a situational mix of activity-oriented, position-oriented, task-oriented and relationship-oriented leadership. This observation supports Fiedler’s widely cited contingency model, which is based on the concept of ‘situational contingency’ (Strube & Garcia, 1981) which recognises all leadership is inherently contextual.

Finally, despite efforts to mediate the message and make digestible the implementation of Stream at the grass-root level, the Pro-Vice Chancellor’s positional leadership and strong task-oriented focus, did not secure the support of all staff. Although this point is not surprising given the nature of a challenging senior leadership role, the experience of “streaming down from the top” needs to be understood in the ‘bigger picture’ of wider structural changes and institutional reforms. On reflection, although tainted by one of the author’s central role in leading the initiative, the overarching lesson from the case study is that the people delivering the message or the proposed innovation are just as important as the message or proposed innovation itself. This observation raises interesting questions about the interactions between Leadership (different theories), Leaders (different styles) and Leading (the effect of a leader’s leadership) in the context of learning leadership in online, blended and distance education.

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# Swimming Up Stream: Micro Level Redesign in Uncharted Waters

Mark Brown, Helen Hughes & Scott Symonds

## Background

This case study reports the experience of program renewal and curriculum leadership in an undergraduate degree major in the area of Social Sciences. It describes how the implementation of a new Learning Management System (aka Stream) at Massey University was used by a small group of staff as an opportunity to redesign the content and structure of a specific major in the Bachelor of Arts (BA) program. In particular, the case study highlights how leadership through activity, influence and relationship building coupled with ‘middle out’ support by a Flexible Learning and Teaching Consultant, rather than any direct line management, played a key role in helping staff to explore new opportunities for online, blended and distance learning. Notably, the concept of readiness is important, as the program in question was ready for redevelopment; at the time of the initiative it was under some pressure to attract and retain sufficient numbers of students. Moreover, the curriculum needed to be updated to more effectively and efficiently support teaching across different delivery modes and through multi-campus offerings. Although the case study is written from the knowledge and perspective of those leading the initiative at a university-wide level, the academic staff involved, not widely known as being early adopters of new technology, were highly motivated and task-oriented to revitalise their curriculum through the use of Stream and related new digital technologies. Overall, the initiative provides an example of a ‘bottom-up’ or more organically driven approach to curriculum renewal—albeit on a relatively small scale.

## Visions & Initial Targets

The implementation of Massey’s new Learning Management System was part of a university-wide project with a budget of NZ\$4.5 million. In 2008 when the University’s Senior Leadership Team approved the three-year project, the academic College was under the leadership of an acting Pro-Vice Chancellor. The case study is set against the backdrop of the University’s *Road to 2020 Strategy* (Massey University, 2009), which sets a big goal for teaching and learning of providing an exceptional and distinctive learning experience for all students. A major commitment to exploiting the potential of new digital media to enhance the Massey student experience was a key component of this goal. Another key aspect was the need for academic reform on a programme-wide basis to ensure the relevance and sustainability of the University’s academic portfolio. The business case for the Stream Project identified three strategic drivers:

- To respond to the challenge of the so-called Google Generation;
- To enhance the quality of teaching and thereby maintain Massey’s University pre-eminent status as a flexible learning and distance education provider;
- To introduce a new blended model of teaching that increases the level of student engagement and provides a learning experience relevant to the requirements of today’s Knowledge Society. (Brown, Paewai & Suddaby, 2010).



Within the wider context of Academic Reform and the University's strategic plan, the intention was to revitalize the undergraduate major to provide a more engaging and future-focused curriculum. Such a curriculum would, in turn, help to attract higher numbers of students and thereby ensure the longer-term viability of the program. It was seen that Stream could be the platform through which this could become possible, especially given the potential to maximise multi-campus staff resources, communication and collaboration via the online architecture. In particular, the goal was to transition from printed to digital study resources in line with, and in many respects ahead of, the wider university strategy. As a relatively small initiative targeting just one paper (unit) in the first instance, but with the aim of adopting a consistent 'look and feel' across the entire discipline major, the case study had the potential to become a valuable 'beacon project' to exemplify the implementation of Stream for other programs and academic units at Massey University.

## Strategies & Activities

A full-time project manager who reported to a Project Board in keeping with Prince 2 project methodology managed the implementation of Stream. Several working groups were established under the Project Board with responsibility for leading different dimensions of the project, including a College Development Working Group. The role of this Working Group was to help prioritise, coordinate and monitor the implementation of Stream within colleges and academic units. More specifically, the intention was to work with colleges to develop an implementation plan that identified and allocated appropriate supports and professional development resources at the time and point of need. The local college initiative described in this case study was one of the first examples within the University where a small group of academic staff willingly volunteered to be early adopters in the implementation of Stream.

First and foremost, the program coordinator, widely respected within the University, leveraged his influence as a thoughtful 'opinion leader' through the activities he undertook to engage other staff in the initiative. He established a close working relationship with one of the Flexible Teaching & Learning Consultants employed in a central service unit and personally experimented with a range of technologies that were part of the Stream toolbox. This experimentation included using Stream as a virtual 'playpen' for collaboration and content development among the wider academic team who contribute to the program across three campuses.

From this starting point in 2009, the program coordinator played an important role in supporting and facilitating deeper discussions with colleagues about the nature of teaching and learning in a more networked and globally connected world. The ability to personally use tools such as Adobe Presenter along with input from a supportive Flexible Teaching & Learning Consultant was crucial in helping to better understand how to exploit the potential of digital media. After experimenting with a number of tools and digital formats, the innovation resulted in the full replacement of traditional printed study materials with online course readings. In other words, the traditional 'pack and post' approach to distance education was replaced with a brief online tutorial or introduction to each course reading using an innovative 'Five x Five' model. That is, instead of a traditional written study guide each reading was introduced by an audio presentation in Adobe Presenter, embedded in Stream, lasting no more than five minutes and comprising no more than five PowerPoint slides. This model and the use of Adobe Presenter as the delivery system through Stream were considered the most appropriate both

pedagogically and technically. At the time of this decision, even those students with limited broadband access could view the brief five-minute presentations in Adobe Presenter. Moreover, embedded notes on each slide helped to mitigate some of the accessibility issues associated with the use of digital content. This learning design strategy reflected a great deal of thought about the student experience from the learners' perspective.

Importantly, through the experimentation process a conscious decision was taken by staff involved to personalise the online learning experience. Therefore, a strong teacher presence was developed through the use of short, informal, personable video introductions. In keeping with the intention to build a real connection with students, typically these short 'video nuggets' were recorded using the built in computer camera in the staff member's office. Hence they were not studio quality presentations, but importantly the videos conveyed a sense of realism and authenticity that could not have been achieved more conventionally. Again, this was a conscious design decision even though use of a local camera was also a matter of convenience.

In addition, the learning design was planned to encourage active discussions in online forums, which was intended to provide an environment for deeper reflection. For distance students, this opportunity for discussion was seen as a valuable alternative to and extension of the conventional face-to-face tutorial. That said, a key feature of the development process is that it began with the basic premise that 'if we could start from scratch, how would we do it?'. In this sense, the innovation through Stream was attempting to break new ground rather than attempting to apply an old way of teaching and learning to a new technology.

Notably, the experiences of the Program Coordinator were later captured in a short video which shared important tips for other academic staff working with Stream. This video along with several presentations given at University events is evidence of the wider sense of responsibility and leadership perceived by those involved in the project. Finally, the team of staff leading the initiative also decided for formative development purposes to evaluate their implementation of Stream through a student survey in September 2009. The development of this survey showed genuine desire on behalf of staff to enhance the quality of teaching through evidence in the tradition of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning.

## Outcomes

First and foremost the original paper (unit) in question was completely redesigned as a fully online course.

The staff generated student survey indicated that around half of the students perceived that Stream improved their interactions with staff. Also, in terms of interactively with content, 60% of students identified that the use of mini online presentations in Adobe Presenter was the most useful function within Stream. The extent in which digital delivery quickly became the new normal is evidenced by a 400% increase by the following offering of the paper (unit) in the number of electronic assignment submissions.

The original learning design became the benchmark for future developments of other papers (units) offered within the undergraduate major. In this sense the outcomes went well beyond the original course development and even became a University-wide example of how to effectively

use Stream to enhance the teaching and learning process. A number of presentations were given both internally and externally in which examples were shown of the work that was undertaken in redesigning this paper (unit).

Notably, the experience has subsequently been important in contributing to current plans to make greater use of the role and impact of new social media as a topic of study. In this sense, the adoption of Stream and related technologies for online, blended and distance delivery served to highlight some of the issues related to the digital revolution occurring in some sectors of society, although the intention to draw on this phenomenon as a major course theme may have come about regardless of the innovation. Finally, the staff involved in the innovation and specifically the Program Coordinator, were recognised for their innovative teaching through a prestigious university-wide teaching award. And some of these staff are now centrally involved in a new innovation using leading-edge video-linked learning technology, and the viability of the discipline appears to be more sustainable.

## Challenges / Limitations

It needs to be noted that this case study of innovative program renewal was confined to a handful of staff. Although the small scale of the project helped to make the initiative more manageable and probably enabled greater scope for innovation, it also adds a number of limitations and caveats to what can be learnt from the experience. At this micro level the experience of program renewal is highly idiosyncratic due to the nature of the staff involved and the specific curriculum and institutional context.

Without diminishing the important contribution of the program team, especially their willingness to take on such major curriculum innovation, much of the success of the initiative can be attributed to the Program Coordinator and the role of the Flexible Teaching & Learning Consultant. These two staff was highly skilled and both strongly predisposed towards curriculum innovation, which made them a unique and powerful combination. Moreover, they were willing to devote considerable time to the initiative in order to experiment with a range of different learning design and technology solutions. This type of commitment is unlikely to be scalable and sustainable in a much larger mesa level program renewal initiative involving a greater number of staff. In other words, the intense energy/enthusiasm for change from a small, closely collaborative and relatively united group of academic staff may be unrealistic to expect in a significantly larger academic program or organisational unit.

On the other hand, the small scale of the project was not without its own challenges, especially as staff were distributed across several campuses. A major aim of the initiative was to generate productive future-focused discussions about what the curriculum should involve and how the program should be taught and this type of dialogue might be easier to generate and promote in slightly larger program teams. Also, partly due to the small scale of the initiative, to a large extent the project occurred under the radar and away from the gaze of senior management, which gave space for the innovation to breathe. However, the relative invisibility of the curriculum innovation from senior management within the College also limited its potential impact on influencing the thinking and recruiting the support of positional leaders.

## Connections, Collegiality & Networks

A key feature of the initiative was the level of dialogue and collaboration between academic staff. The use of a 'playpen' within Stream was a particularly innovative way to engage staff across campuses as it enabled for ideas about the different curriculum and learning designs to emerge in the same environment they would be using with students. In this sense, the use of Stream in this way helped to socialise staff to the possibilities and allowed them to 'walk the talk'. Such an approach to the challenges of learning about the affordances of different technology solutions as part of a larger program renewal initiative may have wider transferability to other curriculum and learning design projects.

One of the other standout features of the project was the strong connections and level of collegiality established with Flexible Teaching and Learning Consultants, and one in particular, in the wider central service unit responsible for supporting academic development. This type of demand-led 'middle out' collaboration at a program level helped to enhance and validate the wider credibility of the Stream Project. It brought the initiative to the attention of those leading the project, which in turn gave wider exposure to the curriculum innovation and the way in which Stream was being conceptualised both within and beyond the University.

More importantly, the finished Stream environment and the facilitation of online discussion fora by staff helped to build a stronger sense of community and social presence amongst students enrolled in the paper (unit). Students across campuses and delivery modes were able to interact and establish relationships with staff and fellow learners in ways they had rarely if ever experienced, which was an important transformation to the course delivery.

## Reflective Practice & Practice Experimentation

Key staff leading the initiative was committed to reflecting on their own practice as evidenced by the decision to undertake a survey of the student experience. The findings of this survey confirmed the value of brief online tutorials and helped to inform further developments to the curriculum and learning design.

This commitment to reflection extended to sharing the innovation through a number of University presentations, including at the Vice-Chancellor's Symposium. A short video clip was also produced towards the end of the project to share lessons for others thinking about similar innovations in the context of Stream. The experience was also reported beyond the University as part of a wider symposium at an ascilite conference (O'Hara, et. al., 2009) and during several national and international conference presentations describing Massey University's Stream Project (e.g., Brown, 2010; Symonds, 2010).

Finally, there was evidence of practice experimentation throughout the initiative as affordances of different technology solutions were evaluated and weighed up against each other in terms of technical and pedagogical advantages. In many respects, the extent of experimentation is not obvious to end-users but is a quality that stands out in the simplicity and overall elegance of the learning design. This experimentation has continued in the willingness of staff to participate in, and shape the direction of, a major new video-linked teaching initiative.

## Reflections on Learning Leadership

A standout feature of this project was the ‘bottom up’ nature of the innovation and the level of collaboration that occurred between staff. In this regard, the case study illustrates the importance of relationship-oriented leadership, as the success of this project was highly dependent on pre-existing collegiality that existed between the major actors. An extension of this collegiality was the strong relationship established with the Flexible Learning and Teaching Consultant who made a significant contribution throughout each stage of the innovation.

The case study also shows the importance of enabling micro leaders as they can create interest, enthusiasm and unparalleled momentum for an innovation at a local level. This is especially the case in a university environment where academics are known to value their autonomy. In a similar vein, it shows the influence that opinion leaders can have in generating support and steering the direction of an innovation, especially when they have a degree of local positional leadership (but not line management) linked to their role in coordinating an academic program.

That said, the program renewal initiative and innovative use of new digital technology described in this case study was also highly task and activity-oriented, as there were strong drivers to transform the conventional model of teaching and learning to support students distributed across campuses and delivery modes. In many respects, the shared goal of achieving an outcome that would address the challenges facing this program helped to maintain focus, ensured steady progress and contributed to a high level of cohesion amongst staff. It follows that the initial success of this program renewal effort was influenced by a complex ecology of highly situated interrelations, which potentially limits the transferability of the specific technology and pedagogical solutions to other contexts. Having said that overarching lesson is that many of the innovative outcomes would not have been possible through more conventional ‘top-down’ approaches to institutional leadership. In other words, the creative space available for local innovation and local approaches to leadership, in all its forms, was crucial to enabling the adoption of Stream in a transformative manner.

Finally, the organic and localised nature of the innovation was also weakness in terms of its wider impact. Although the initiative was able to flourish as the micro nature of the project was largely under the radar of organisational bureaucracy, and the scale of development was relatively small in terms of the much larger Stream Project, to some extent it remained an ‘island of innovation’, especially from those in more senior roles of positional leadership. Thus, in swimming up-stream to explore relatively uncharted waters relatively little would have been learned from the experience beyond those involved without middle out support and informal linkages established to people with responsibility for fostering institution-wide innovation.

# Acknowledgements

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# The Nexus Between Space, Time, Teaching and Learning

John Rafferty and Natasha Hard

## Background

The Flexible Learning Institute's (FLI) Teaching Fellowship Scheme (TFS) was established by Professor Mike Keppell in 2008 at Charles Sturt University (CSU). Since this time, almost all Schools at the university have had a staff member participate in the Scheme. The following case study is about one such Teaching Fellow from the School of Education. The case study was developed with Mr Edlington, drawing upon Fellowship documents, interviews and conversations which included the development of an impact map.

In 2011, Dr Rafferty undertook his Teaching Fellowship project titled 'Campus Learning: exploring the nexus between space, time, teaching and learning'.

*Often when we talk about flexible learning and blended learning we automatically think of virtual spaces or electronic spaces. And that is an important part of what we do, but this project looks quite specifically at spaces beyond virtual, and beyond the confines of a classroom (J.Rafferty in FLIMedia, 2012).*

The project built upon the Carrick Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education's 2007 project 'Places and Spaces For Learning Seminars' and the ALTC funded project 'Spaces for Knowledge Generation' by Souter, Riddle, Sellers and Keppell (2011). Space, according to Le Grew (2008), is an abstract notion which only becomes a place when it is injected with identity and meaning and in the current higher education context it is becoming an increasingly tangible resource for Australian universities. Learning spaces are places of learning because they are given that identity and with the increase in technology-enhanced and blending learning, academics and students are being increasingly awarded flexibility in time, pace, place and mode of study. Despite the abundance of available possibilities, notions of time and space in regard to teaching and learning have often remained fixed and scripted, based around traditional learning spaces and approaches.

This project reflects the imperative of higher education institutions to provide opportunities for students to be self-motivated and independent learners in a context where expectations about the student experience and the delivery of education are evolving. Whilst it has been argued that the key factor driving change in learning design has been centred on the availability of broadband wireless internet (Rheingold as cited in Keppell, Souter & Riddle, 2012); the importance of natural and outdoor spaces remains an important element of learning and the student experience. Charles Sturt University's Albury-Wodonga campus, where Dr Rafferty is based, was developed in an environmentally sensitive manner with particular emphasis placed on passive energy design, low cost maintenance, water management and the progressive ecological rehabilitation of the campus (Harrison & Mitchell, 2001). In addition to providing a traditional physical setting, it was intended that "the buildings [would] also provide a dynamic model for sustainable living and unique opportunities for community and student engagement"



(Rafferty, 2012, p. 53). Over several years and with support from the Murray School of Education, the Faculty of Education and the Division of Facilities Management, Dr Rafferty identified and developed numerous informal learning spaces on the campus. Despite the availability of such learning spaces, they remained largely underused, meaning students and teachers were missing out on learning opportunities that the campus provided.

## Visions & Initial Targets

The Fellowship project was designed to maximise student feedback in learning space design and influence the strategic development of learning spaces and teaching practices at the university. The Fellowship sought to identify and map personal learning environments of students and educators, with ‘understanding the nexus between time, space and pedagogy’ the main focus of investigation. “Teaching and learning is quite a dynamic process... the traversing of spaces helps us explore that dynamic” (J.Rafferty in FLIMedia, 2012).

The Fellowship project also aimed to promote the value of learning spaces, increase the use of natural and informal learning spaces as well as provide an improved approach to blended and flexible teaching and learning. To help achieve these outcomes Dr Rafferty hoped to create a ‘sandbox’ environment for academics to improve students’ learning experiences through adopting greater flexibility in time, pace, place, mode of study, teaching approach and forms of assessment in the design and delivery of learning experiences (Rafferty, 2010). Dr Rafferty would support this process through mentoring and guiding staff in their use of learning spaces and prompt educators to question and challenge their own pedagogical practices. The development of interactive tools and artefacts resulting from this collaboration was hoped to support educators and challenge them to critically engage with their pedagogical practices whilst highlighting the affordances of learning spaces.

The inclusion of the student voice through conducting focus groups with students hoped to provide greater insights into the continuing provision of leading edge flexible learning and teaching. It also provided an opportunity for students to reflect upon the way that their own personal learning environment (PLE) is constructed and the various factors that enhance or impact upon their individual learning experiences.

The project sought to address the following key questions as outlined in Dr Rafferty’s interim report (2011):

- 1. What personal learning environments do tertiary students design/use to enhance their studies?**
- 2. How does space influence students’ generation of content?**
- 3. What relationships exist between students’ personal learning environment and the formal learning environments of a university course?**
- 4. What relationships exist between educators’ pedagogical principles and student’s learning experience?**

A secondary research question explored the benefits associated with social networking software as a data gathering tool.

## Strategies & Activities

This Fellowship project was designed to build relationships between Dr Rafferty and a range of educators over a period of time. Dr Rafferty would encourage these educators to explore different perspectives on the use of teaching and learning spaces as well as ask provocative questions. This approach provided the academics involved with the opportunity to explore, challenge and change the way they think about and engage with pedagogy relative to their teaching environments. In particular, the Fellowship intended to draw attention to the potential afforded by outdoor spaces as places for creative and effective learning experiences; although other non-traditional spaces were also explored. The project was conducted over two sessions with the first session focused on academics located on the Albury-Wodonga Campus and the second session broadening out to include academics across four different campuses.

### Session 1 - Staff from the Albury-Wodonga Campus

This initial phase of the project, based at CSU's Albury-Wodonga campus, involved engaging with five educators from four different schools. Dr Rafferty built relationships with the academics, mentoring and guiding them in their thinking and teaching over the course of the semester. Dr Rafferty discussed the development and design of learning experiences, teaching objectives and where time and space fitted into the plans of educators. Building on these conversations and relationships, Dr Rafferty observed the environments established and utilised by the educators and also engaged some students in focus groups to discuss their views on the design of these spaces. This initial phase had a strong focus on the outdoor environment and the importance and possibilities it afforded academics and educators on the Albury-Wodonga Campus. Additionally, it looked at the elements that constitute learning spaces and how and when people (staff and students) use time and space.

### Session 2- Staff from the Albury-Wodonga, Wagga Wagga, Bathurst & Orange Campuses

This second phase involved working with another five educators; but in this session, the educators were spread across a variety of campuses including Albury-Wodonga, Wagga Wagga, Bathurst and Orange. Including educators from a variety of disciplines and locations was seen to provide valuable understandings of challenges related to flexible learning methods, learning designs and learning spaces from a university-wide perspective (Rafferty, 2010). Dr Rafferty had discussions with educators regarding the design of their subjects, even participating in one course offered by distance to gain a better understanding of the student experience. This type of observation informed conversations Dr Rafferty had with educators about subject planning and key learning objectives. Once again, these discussions focused on how the academics used time and space when thinking about the learning environment. However, the learning environment held a wider meaning than in the first session. Dr Rafferty also gained feedback from some of the students that had participated in these subjects. Thus, this project brought together a range of educators and students from a variety of disciplines into shared conversations about teaching and learning.

## Additional Activities

Dr Rafferty was, and continues to be involved in a range of initiatives related to time, space, the environment and student learning which are outside the boundaries of his Fellowship. These projects included building links with local community and indigenous groups, encouraging students to consider their own environments and building learning and teaching tools to address issues of learning design more formally. Whilst not directly relevant to his Fellowship, Dr Rafferty's involvement in these activities was influential in shaping the design, focus and implementation of his Fellowship project. In addition, they help illustrate the types of engagement, collaboration and mechanisms for change that are readily adopted by Dr Rafferty. They also highlight the context from which this Fellowship project emerged. The directionality of exchanges and causal relationships at play were however, quite complex with many of these projects having gained increased recognition and legitimacy through Dr Rafferty Fellowship, whilst at the same time many informed the design and implementation of the Fellowship Project (J.Rafferty, personal communication, November 23, 2011).

## Intended Project Deliverables

The intended deliverables, based on Fellowship requirements centred on the development of an Interact project site titled 'Campus Learning' (Rafferty, 2010) which would house the following tools and artefacts:

1. **Detailed map of the campus identify Learning scapes**
2. **Demonstrations of the types of activity suitable for each space**
3. **Audio and visual records chronicling the development of each case**
4. **Guidelines for using Learning Spaces**
5. **Literature review**
6. **Resources**
7. **Online discussions within CSU and the wider community concerning learning scapes.**
8. **Websites and reading list**
9. **Synchronous and asynchronous discussion opportunities**
10. **Links to similar projects.**

## Outcomes

Whilst the Fellowship project started with a particular focus on the affordances of outdoor spaces on the Albury-Wodonga campus, it evolved especially in the second phase to focus more on space generally and students perspectives of learning spaces (J.Rafferty, post-project interview, February 24, 2012).

In this section, the outcomes are broken down into two sections; firstly research findings and secondly, the less explicit outcomes and impacts of the Fellowship are explored. However, Dr Rafferty felt that due to the nature of the project, there may be outcomes that appear further into the future. “I think we need a broader view at some of the outcomes... A lot of what we are doing here is shaping the way we think and that is going to play out over a longer period of time” [than the time students spend at university (J.Rafferty in FLIMedia, 2012).

## Research Findings

In exploring the key research questions, Dr Rafferty found that (Rafferty, 2011):

- Educators and students design and engage with an incredible array of personal learning environments and there is an increasing interest in the value of outdoor spaces.
- Students actually indicated that they often sought protected spaces where they could be disengaged.
- Space had a minimal influence on student generation of content. In fact this study discovered that it was the spirit of scholarship within a space that had the greatest influence on students and student engagement. While the term spirit may be “steeped in sort of ontological obscurity” (Derrida, 1991, p. 15) it provides a powerful, albeit difficult, concept for discussing learning spaces and personal learning environments. This spirit enabled educators and students to act with the necessary courage to stake a claim on their own academic being and mobility.
- Virtual spaces have had similar findings with students seeking a sense of connection and interest on the part of the teacher, be it through synchronous or asynchronous media, they appeared to value that sense of connection and engagement with them even if it is simply replying to a forum posting.
- Common components exist between personal learning environments and formal learning environments. Passion, connection, claiming an identity, engagement and mobility in space and time are all commonalities.

Answering the secondary research question would require further development.

## Fellowship Outcomes

Some of the key themes that emerged from the Fellowship project itself were:

- Participating in the scheme gave many educators the confidence and license to challenge some of issues and operational parameters around time, space and delivery that they had previously felt unable to do (J.Rafferty, pre-project interview, May 13, 2011; J.Rafferty in FLIMedia, 2011).

*I've had one fellow come to me and say sort of personally that this has really changed completely the way she's operating... Another one has come to me and said I'm looking at things really differently now, that whole notion of time and space (J.Rafferty, post-project interview, February 24, 2012).*

- The project helped improve understandings of the role of Educational Designers (ED) and resulted in an increased dialogue between academics and EDs (J.Rafferty, pre-project interview, 2011).
- There were increasing numbers of people engaging with the idea of space and time in relation to teaching and learning in addition to more people using outdoor spaces (J.Rafferty, personal communication, November 23, 2011).
- Through interactions with students Dr Rafferty was able to increase student awareness of different learning spaces and learning opportunities.
- Engaging in conversations of pedagogy and witnessing the innovative practices of other academics provided many learning opportunities and helped consolidate Dr Rafferty's own ideas and practices. "...academically it has been fantastic. I've been invited with you [the Director of the FLI] to that conference on spaces... and I've picked up a PhD student now... and I've got a number of pending articles" (J.Rafferty, post-project interview, February 24, 2012). In fact, "...the joy of the fellowship was having the ability to learn a lot from others and my experiences, synthesise that and be able to have informed discussions" (J.Rafferty, personal communication, November 30, 2011).
- The Fellowship provided Dr Rafferty with the credibility to say that learning space was really important based on his Fellowship findings, and therefore, these learning spaces were legitimate teaching and learning resources and, thus, required sufficient infrastructure and funding.

## Challenges / Limitations

Several key challenges surfaced during the Fellowship, including:

- Finding the time to engage, discuss and reflect upon learning spaces with academics proved problematic as these discussions were often viewed as an additional demand (J.Rafferty, personal communication, November 23, 2011).

- Whilst targeting academics that were particularly innovative and active was desired, it proved increasingly difficult to engage with them as they were busy focusing on such practices and often had a tendency to be protective of what they were doing with their students (J.Rafferty, personal communication, November 23, 2011).
- The organisation had created a very structured environment, reinforcing traditional notions of what, how, where and when teaching and learning should occur. “A couple of people I worked with, academics I worked with in particular thought there were some institutional barriers stopping them doing anything other than having a traditional lecture followed by a traditional tutorial” (J.Rafferty, post-project interview, February 24, 2012). Therefore, the challenge was to engage with staff and students and encourage them to think beyond these boundaries.
- Recognising the heterogeneous nature of staff and student groups was important with one of the other major challenges being not to stereotype certain groups such as internal students, DE students or academics. There is no one-size fits all approach to the design, use and understanding of time and space.

## Connections, Collegiality & Networks

Dr Rafferty’s Fellowship project was about building connections and relationships with staff to increase dialogue and understanding about when and where learning and teaching occurs. “One of the key things that drive my teaching is the development of relationships. I think that’s a fundamental aspect of the teaching and learning process and the communication that comes from good relationships” (J.Rafferty in FLIMedia, 2012).

In addition, Dr Rafferty engaged directly with students to gain insights into their use and views on space and learning. Thus, this project was reliant upon the successful engagement with both academic and student bodies to develop improved ideas about where learning and teaching occurs. Developing successful and trusting relationships with academics was essential if Dr Rafferty was to be invited to view and participate in their classes, discuss pedagogy, influence traditional notions of where and when learning occurs and foster the confidence for academics to challenge these traditional conceptions (J.Rafferty, post-project interview, February 24, 2012).

Dr Rafferty worked with nine different educators from at least eight different schools across four different campuses of CSU during his Fellowship. Dr Rafferty likened his role to providing scaffolding, through acting as a critical friend or ‘knowledgeable other’ to the educators involved whilst engaging with the student body to gain additional insights, and raise student awareness of the importance time and space affords learning (J.Rafferty, pre-project interview, May 13, 2011). Through his interactions with others, Dr Rafferty was exposed to new ideas, practices and conversations that contributed to this learning process. This left him with the feeling that he had learnt and been influenced by others just as much as he had taught and influenced those involved.

## Reflective Practice & Practice Experimentation

The development of an impact map provided a chance to explore Dr Rafferty's own understandings and beliefs. Dr Rafferty designed his Impact Map as a circular shape devoid of linear connections to help portray the fluid and dynamic way he perceived the relationships and influences developed throughout his Fellowship. In fact, Dr Rafferty preferred to describe the relationships he developed throughout his Fellowship project as being highly interconnected, dynamic and multidirectional.

Discussions with students also provided insights into their lives that would then help in the way Dr Rafferty would design subjects in the future. Whilst teaching less due to his Fellowship, Dr Rafferty recognised that he continued to influence students, although in different ways, through working with other educators to explore key practices and concepts that would ultimately influence the student experience. Feedback on this process was then gleaned from the students to create an iterative process of development.

In reflecting on his Fellowship, Dr Rafferty felt that it had provided an opportunity to confirm some of the key elements of good practice that he had previously been unable to validate (J.Rafferty, personal communication, November 30, 2011). Moreover, he noted that in an environment that was rapidly changing in regards to expectations and available technologies, it was interesting to find that the essence of good pedagogical practice was very static, that is, that students wanted an enthusiastic, committed and passionate person. Additionally, the nature of his Fellowship saw Dr Rafferty engage in summative and formative conversations with a range staff and students that prompted Dr Rafferty to continually reflect upon and refine his ideas and pedagogy (J.Rafferty, personal communication, November 23, 2011). The time to read and engage with a range of relevant material assisted Dr Rafferty in articulating his ideas and making connections.

As previously mentioned, Dr Rafferty described his role in his Fellowship Project as being like that of a 'critical friend' or 'knowledgeable other'. An important aspect of this approach to change was being able to take the back seat and just listen to what people were doing and what they hoped to achieve. This then provided a base to start discussions and offer a range of suggestions about other things they could do to improve their teaching practice. Engaging in the project helped empower academics to act and try new things; the Fellowship provided a strong enough constitution to take risks (J.Rafferty, pre-project interview, May 13, 2011). Through this interaction academics also gained the confidence to think outside traditional expectations of time and space and re-examine their own practice (J.Rafferty in FLIMedia, 2011).

## Reflections on Learning Leadership

Dr Rafferty emphasised the fact that every person he had worked with was an 'Educational Leader' and that he was not leading them, put rather acting as a 'teaching provocationalist' or 'echo wall' (J.Rafferty, personal communication, November 23, 2011). Dr Rafferty felt that whilst his Fellowship may have put him in a key position where he could bring things together, he didn't see it as having put him in front as a leader. In distancing himself further from the concept of leadership Dr Rafferty made the following statements.



*I am a bit uncomfortable with it [Learning Leadership] I don't think it is a good descriptor. I don't know [how I would describe it]. I'm just uncomfortable with Learning Leadership because it imposes a taxonomy on things, I think there has got to be a more functional dimension to it. . . . I think that some leadership comes out of it and I think that you set the direction and approach new frontiers and new areas. But I don't know if it is leadership in a strict traditional sense of the word (J.Rafferty, personal communication, November 23, 2011).*

However, Dr Rafferty did note that in respect to publicising the activities associated with the Fellowship, he did have a chance to lead, as those he had worked with were very new academics and had less experience in that area. In addition, there appeared to be many similarities between Dr Rafferty's approach and key elements of learning-directed leadership, as proposed by Kayes and Kayes (2011). In particular, Dr Rafferty's approach appeared to align with four of the six elements; those being learning from experience, developing higher order learning, building resilience and nurturing trust (p. 8).

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# Shifting to Student-Centred Facilitation of Learning through Professional Development Initiatives

*Brad Edlington and Natasha Hard*

## Background

The Flexible Learning Institute's (FLI) Teaching Fellowship Scheme (TFS) was established by Professor Mike Keppell in 2008 at Charles Sturt University (CSU). Since this time, almost all Schools at the university have had a staff member participate in the Scheme. The following case study is about one such Teaching Fellow from the School of Policing Studies. The case study was developed with Mr Edlington, drawing upon Fellowship documents, interviews and conversations which included the development of an impact map.

When commencing his Teaching Fellowship in 2011, Mr Edlington worked designing, developing and implementing Problem-Based Learning (PBL) approaches within the Associate Degree of Policing Practice (ADPP). Mr Edlington's Fellowship project was titled 'Shifting to student-centred facilitation of learning: development of blended professional development initiatives for police educators within a student Problem-Based Learning environment'. The use of Problem Based Learning (PBL) in policing education has become quite notable within Australian and North American settings. It has been demonstrated that adopting a student-centred or PBL focus can help students demonstrate better problem solving abilities (Savery, 2006) and consequently improve the ability of probationary constables to make better decisions and apply their knowledge in the field.

Charles Sturt University works in partnership with the NSW Police Force to provide police recruit training and has been attempting to improve the capabilities of probationary constables through implementing a PBL approach within the Associate Degree of Policing Practice (ADPP). A key strategy in facilitating this change has been an additional focus on effective academic staff development strategies including the Facilitator Development Scheme (FDS). As part of the FDS, in January 2010 a suite of immersive workshops were implemented, incorporating amongst others, elements of Emotional Intelligence (Goleman, 1996) and Multiple Intelligences (Gardner, 2004; Shipton, 2011). These were designed to help staff make the necessary conceptual shift in teaching from a teacher-centred approach to a student centred approach (Kember, 1997). The complexity of this shift is however, heightened by the fact that the majority of staff at the School come from a policing background with a culture often atypical to that associated with student-centred approaches. Despite this support for student-centred approaches to police training, the implementation of this strategy remained problematic.

## Visions & Initial Targets

This Fellowship project aimed to support the FDS in effecting a sustainable shift towards effective PBL practice within the School. "There was a need for something a bit different...there was a need for some support to demonstrate what good performance looks like" (B.Edlington, personal communication, February 7, 2012). The project involved developing an e-learning module which sought to provide staff with examples of good practice, a range of resources and

encourage them to reflect upon their own practice. Through providing this education at times when educators had been susceptible to the influence of others, these e-learning products aimed to keep educators ‘on-track’ and provide key strategies to help reduce the likelihood of ‘reverting’ behaviours. ‘Reverting to type’, refers to when teachers revert back to traditional teaching practices despite having undergone training or learning that may be at odds with those ‘traditional’ behaviours. This practice is particularly pertinent within the police education setting “where the type to which police educators most readily revert in the classroom relates closely to their sense of occupational identity where exerting control, gaining compliance and giving direction becomes second nature” (Edlington, 2010, p.2). While these responses may be core abilities in operational policing, they are not supportive of student-centred learning and hence the project saw this as a key area that staff needed to be supported in.

Specifically, the project sought to assist the implementation of student-centred practices in the Associate Degree of Policing Practice through:

- Providing targeted facilitator development opportunities and products that will enable academic staff to more effectively support students within a student-centred learning environment
- Supporting facilitators in taking on new educational values required for the successful implementation of student-centred practice
- Supporting the necessary educational cultural change within the School
- Addressing challenges in facilitator development, especially in areas where current staff development initiatives are proving ineffective
- Leveraging the capabilities inherent in blended and flexible learning technologies and approaches
- Contributing, where appropriate to student-centred facilitator development needs more broadly within CSU and the broader police education community (B.Edlington, pre-project interview, June 8, 2011; Edlington, 2010).

## Strategies & Activities

The Fellowship project centred on developing a set of e-learning objects to provide ongoing support and learning prompts for academics which along with the FDS would help orient staff towards PBL. Practically, these e-learning products were developed in-house, through capturing footage of real academics in the classroom providing real examples of PBL approaches in action as well as their reflections on such student-centred approaches. These e-learning products were designed to build on concepts taught as part of the FDS workshops by prompting facilitators to identify important issues in facilitation and supporting collegial discussion on this issue. The use of wikis, vignettes and other supportive learning objects intended to provide colleagues with the engage in discussion around practice synchronously and asynchronously in the practicum periods following the FDS workshops.

Attempting to address the problem of ‘reverting to type’, was the challenge at the heart of this project. Therefore, the project focused on:

- Student-centred and teacher-centred approaches: what does good look like
- Role of the facilitator
- From operational police officer to police educator (or to be profession-neutral), becoming an educator within your profession or area of expertise
- Occupational identity and how it can affect this transition

Other topics covered which supported facilitators to consciously move away from reverting practices included:

- Questioning techniques
- Managing student cognitive load
- Enhancing emotional intelligence
- Understanding and using multiple intelligences in student-centred classrooms
- Using student-centred facilitation strategies
- Educational debriefing and providing developmental feedback
- Assessment for learning

Through the process of developing the project it became clear that to become an effective facilitator of learning rather than a teacher of students relied upon many things including in most cases, a shift in the values of academic staff. Therefore, a large part of this change process focused on supporting people to become more self-aware and recognise the existing educational culture and values that underpinned that culture. This required staff to have strong emotional intelligence; to be able to monitor their own and others’ feelings and emotions, and be able to use that information to guide thinking and action (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). In this context, where there was a tendency to shy away from critically reflecting upon decisions, the project sought to provide tactful ways to assist people in recognising the importance of critical reflection and self-improvement. This process did not dismiss the role of teacher-centred learning, instead focused on understanding the importance of context and developing the right balance between student-centred and teacher-centred approaches.

## Outcomes

This Fellowship project was delayed in its completion and, therefore, the outcomes of this project centre on the impact that the development phase has had, rather than the impact of the completed e-learning products themselves.

At the time of writing this case study, approximately 50 hours of footage capturing practitioners in action, classes taking place, talking heads and discussions with key facilitators had been

captured. The e-learning modules are planned to go live in August 2012 to follow-up on and support, the Stage 1 FDS workshops to be held at this time.

Despite having not yet been implemented, a key theme that has emerged from the development of the e-learning product has been the importance and impact that the process of developing these artefacts has had in facilitating the process of cultural change.

*...the process of this project is an important and potent one because while there will be certain definable products that come out of this project the intangible benefits that are emerging on a daily basis that have a broader impact and provide impetus for all sorts of other things we're doing, is really hard to define and measure (B.Edlington, mid-project interview, August 23, 2011).*

These benefits were derived in the main from the process of involving staff in the development of the e-learning products; a process which required self-reflection and a clear understanding of one's own values and teaching practice.

Another key outcome or impact of Mr Edlington receiving the Teaching Fellowship was that it legitimated the implementation of student-centred practices and teaching objectives of those involved in the project. Receiving the Fellowship demonstrated that the activities and intentions of this Fellowship were valid and seen as of importance by the university more broadly. "... getting this need recognised and [a proposed response] funded by FLI was yet another way of legitimising the issues that I and a few others actually saw here" (B.Edlington, personal communication, February 7, 2012). This was however problematised when:

*Mid PBL implementation, a decision was made to no longer continue in this direction, but instead for commencement of a major review and rewrite of the Associate Degree in Policing Practice that may at some point in the future incorporate some PBL elements. Clearly the removal of PBL had a major affect on the focus of the project and required an upward shift in focus from PBL to the larger context of student-centred approaches to learning. Much of the project work had centred on PBL which now requires a broader view or shift away from PBL (B.Edlington, personal communication, May 28, 2012).*

## Challenges / Limitations

Negotiating the complex nature of the relationship between the NSW Police and Charles Sturt University provided a challenge to the project. Despite the need for university education in supporting the development and training of police coming over 100 years ago, it was not until the 1960s that the benefits of university education in policing really become accepted (Roberg & Bonn, 2004). Despite this acceptance, the relationship between police organisations and universities continues to be problematic and there remains no standard partnership model (Trofymowych, 2007-8). The complexity of this relationship played out in several ways. Whilst it was originally anticipated that the ratio of CSU academics compared to active Police Trainers depicted in the vignettes would be representative of current teaching numbers, this did not

eventuate. Although police were approached about participating in a considered way, the relevant police were often busy or not in at work on the day intended to shoot the footage. Consequently, at least 80% of footage collected was of CSU staff (B.Edlington, personal communication, February 7, 2012).

Additionally, throughout the project there was a clear distinction between university educators and police trainers, which reflects relevant police education literature suggesting an explicit dichotomy exists between police education and police training (Mahoney & Prenzler 1996). The nature of this distinction is evidenced in the language of the 'red and white' (University) on one side and the 'blue and white' (Police) on the other. "...the second you hop over that line from the blue side to the red and white side you are kind seen as a traitor or as one of them" (B.Edlington, personal communication, February 7, 2012). The significance of this division in this context focused on the implementation of student-centred approaches is evidenced in work by Massey (1993), who found that police education may promote autonomy, unlike police training which encourages police to conform to prevailing cultures which problematised the reflective approach (Adlam, 1999). Despite this complexity, the NSW Police and CSU partnership has been acknowledged internationally as a 'success', despite having it many challenges.

Privacy and technology were also found to be limitations to the project with students often concerned about being captured on film due to the future possibility of working undercover and issues of accessible and appropriate technologies proving time consuming. Workload pressures and difficulties in identifying the boundaries of the project were also challenges.

## Connections, Collegiality & Networks

The nature of this project required direct engagement with other staff through gathering their thoughts, actions and experiences on video. It was intended that about 10-12 people would be involved in the filming, so engaging the Faculty and School members in the project was a key strategy of the project. Collaboration occurred with SOPS staff, broader CSU and Police College staff as well as those in the wider disciplinary community. It was anticipated that the project would reach between 60 and 100 facilitators (B.Edlington, mid-project interview, August 23, 2011). As noted previously, these interactions with staff proved highly important in fostering this change process. To help disseminate the project products, there is the intention to share them, where appropriate, with members of the international Police Society for Problem-based Learning as well as the Durham Regional Police Service in Canada.

In addition to the connections made with the colleagues from his School, many of the connections Mr Edlington made were directly related to his involvement in the Teaching Fellowship Scheme, including other Teaching Fellows and FLI staff. Mr Edlington noted that one of the most beneficial methods of building connections and relationships was through the regular catch-ups known as '59mins@FLI', which were webinars which brought the current cohort of Fellows to discuss their project developments and seek feedback. Mr Edlington also noted that the interviews conducted by the Director of the FLI as part of his research on the Scheme and the mentoring provided by the Scheme's Strategic Projects Officer were highly valuable.



## Reflective Practice & Practice Experimentation

The development of the impact map proved quite an effective tool for stimulating reflection and discussion about Mr Edlington's own understandings and beliefs. In doing so, Mr Edlington placed the 'Student Experience and Learning' at the centre of his educational context with the sharp lines of the border indicating the definite boundaries and constraints that shape this activity. In this context, Mr Edlington saw that successful student engagement and learning was dependent upon igniting the enthusiasm and willingness of students and staff and this provided the basis for his approach.

Additionally, in developing his Impact Map, Mr Edlington very intentionally placed a bubble on the reverse of the paper, not to devalue its significance but to demonstrate the separation from the work context. This contained terms such as values, beliefs, life, philosophy and building upon the value inherent in everyone. Setting aside work and anything to do with employment, Mr Edlington highlighted the importance that every individual's approach, their own set of beliefs, values and philosophy bring to the mix.

*... I want to leave the place a better place. And perhaps the tools I have at my disposal to do that and affect the student experience. So this is a job and I get paid for it ... some of the influences on all this are my philosophy and I like to think some of the more noble sorts of things (B.Edlington, personal communication, February 7, 2012).*

As previously stated, the staff involved in the development of the vignettes also underwent a process of self-reflection in building the necessary understandings to communicate their practices and values to others. Staff from all levels of experience were prompted to reflect and look back at key points in their development journey and in doing so, identify what it was that helped them develop a sound understanding of student-centred practice and the benefits it affords.

*We're getting people to do this deep reflection. We're getting different sorts of discussions and conversations about this than we would otherwise have. We're getting, if you like, more significant cross pollination of ideas that in some cases are making it to the realm of practise than would otherwise have occurred. This is a very subjective thing (B.Edlington, mid-project interview, August 23, 2011).*

Mr Edlington provided the following key reflections on his Fellowship experience:

- Undertaking projects designed to achieve some form of change are clearly susceptible to a range of factors that can adversely impact on proposed outcomes and on the overall success of such projects.
- Reliance on infrastructure such as Interact, CSU's learning management system, became a key dependency to the project's success. . . . Early establishment and ongoing nurturing of a relationship with the relevant sections of the information technology division, especially in the scoping phase of any project, is strongly advised by many.

- The threat of sudden strategic changes within an institution cannot be entirely ruled out at the outset of any project. However, when such a change emerges before the previous changes such as the introduction of PBL have had time to consolidate, then many things can be unexpectedly uprooted.
- An expected part of project work is that some things will change. What is sometimes impossible to anticipate is from what direction that change will come and the depth of impact that this may have. The factors discussed in this section combine in an unusual way that would normally be described as a show-stopping. The significantly altered project continues and is due for completion by the end of 2012.

(B.Edlington, personal communication, May 28, 2012).

## Reflections on Learning Leadership

In this case study, Mr Edlington adopted a pragmatic, situational leadership style (Hersey & Blanchard, 1977). “I think it’s sort of monitoring, being able to monitor how things are changing and progressing and respond accordingly...” (B.Edlington, mid-project interview, August 23, 2011). Although legitimised to some degree through receiving the Fellowship, Mr Edlington affected change through an informal and participatory approach. Throughout this process, he recognised and fostered the potential of other staff, acknowledging that everyone had a role to play in bringing about change and that everyone had essential skills to bring to the table. The trials and tribulations of colleagues, their failures and their successes were highly influential especially in terms of massaging and tailoring processes to respond to changing needs.

Mr Edlington adopted a range of strategies to assist in bringing about change, including:

- Engaging with colleagues and expert practitioners to develop tools that have value and are recognised as being of importance
- Influencing the practice and understandings of other staff through prompting reflective practice and building awareness of ‘good practice’ in BFL
- Facilitating strong and powerful engagement through interaction to help empower staff and ignite enthusiasm and willingness
- Leading by example - adopting a situated approach and walking the talk.

Reflecting upon the relationship that the Teaching Fellowship itself had on facilitating and developing leadership behaviours is highly speculative. Using the language of creativity and innovation, the quote below appears to indicate that the Fellowship provided an avenue for Mr Edlington to develop his leadership potential.

*Through endless frustration... through quite a lot of enthusiasm if you like and I guess my nature is one... to really want to be creative and to innovate... and to come up with what might be clever ways through the quagmire. Doing the same thing every day would have me bored in seventeen seconds. The thing that feeds me is the need to take opportunities to innovate. That is what energises me (B.Edlington, personal communication, February 7, 2012).*

Through the process of developing this project, Mr Edlington's colleagues came to increasingly recognise his expertise in this area. This saw an increasing number of requests for his involvement in related activities and initiatives across the university. Additionally, Mr Edlington was invited to assist in the introduction of student-centred approaches within the Indonesian National Police. This saw him spend approximately a month conducting trainer training as part of a United Nations project in the area of transnational crime prevention training in Asia. Consequently, the skills and recognition received through developing this project were seen by Mr Edlington as having had considerable professional and career implications. The increased confidence and sense of satisfaction gained through these experiences also proved a critical factor in shaping his professional identity. For example, "It [the Fellowship] makes me think more significantly about where I want to be in five years" (B.Edlington, mid-project interview, August 23, 2011).

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# Course Conversations as Learning Leadership - the case of the Blended and Flexible Learning Course Team Symposiums

*Carole Hunter*

## Background

During 2011, CSU began the rollout of the CSUDegree Initiative, which aimed for comprehensive and continuing curriculum renewal around a set of university commitments to all undergraduate students. These commitments stated that, in addition to the development of disciplinary and professional knowledge, undergraduate students would be offered a range of learning opportunities and pedagogical approaches, including the opportunity to develop skills to learn effectively in a range of environments. By late 2011, CSU's newly appointed Course Directors were required to systematically explain to university management (through an Annual Course Performance Report, or ACPR), as well as to students, how their undergraduate courses, subjects, activities and assessments had been designed to orchestrate the CSU Degree experience. Course teams were required to set priorities for course renewal, determined through risk assessments based on course data, and collaboratively develop plans for working towards those priorities.

The Flexible Learning Institute (FLI) viewed these drivers as an opportunity to provide both an incentive and support for course teams to engage with themes and issues related to blended and flexible learning (BFL) in their own context. It established Course Team Symposium Grants, which were offered to Course Directors to help them engage their teams in this process. These grants included:

- A small (\$2000) financial grant, primarily used to cover travel and accommodation costs,
- Planning, resource and strategic support before the symposium (including, in some cases, pre-symposium event/s designed to prepare the team for the planning process),
- One-the-day support during the symposium from at least one member of the FLI team, and
- Follow-up meetings to determine progress towards the team's agreed goals.

The activities in each symposium were developed in conjunction with the course leaders, and varied depending on their stage of team development, awareness and use of BFL, and the kinds of issues/problems they were facing. The ultimate goal was to develop a BFL strategy for course transformation in light of new visions and priorities, which could also be used as part of the ACPR. During implementation, course teams also developed examples of BFL design that could be shared with others within the CSU community.

## Visions & Initial Targets

The FLI vision was for each Symposium team to generate a course plan/strategy describing how BFL would be embedded into the student experience across the course, with concrete examples of BFL strategies that had been developed for sharing with the CSU community. Teams were encouraged to disseminate their work within their School, to extend engagement with BFL to other course teams.

As part of the application process, each team also developed their own symposium aims, the most common related to raising awareness of good practice in BFL and new opportunities, and the development of a course strategy that outlined a 'clear path' to guide future developments. To a lesser extent, teams wanted to analyse current practice (n=5), work towards equivalent learning experiences (n=4) and a wide range of context specific needs, such as developing strategies for teaching large cohorts and economics of scale across multiple courses.

A total of 21 teams in 12 symposia were supported during the 2010-2011 period, including a pre-degree program and a Masters level course. Grant recipients represented all Faculties in relatively equal numbers, with the exception of the Faculty of Business, who were only granted one of the 12 symposiums.

While the relatively ambitious FLI vision for the symposiums hasn't been fully realised during the first year of the scheme (2011), this case study points towards multiple benefits, including developing a shared understanding of BFL, empowering both course leaders and academics, providing a platform for building effective course team processes and for course leaders to continue to refine their thinking about learning leadership, and as a starting point for wider and more transformative design changes.

## Strategies & Activities

After determining the number of grants to be offered, FLI advertised the Symposium offer through internal communication channels and communities. The application process involved a form completed in GoogleDocs, as well as signed approval from the team's Head of School. Applications were reviewed by the FLI team, with approvals being loosely based on the aims of the symposium, if BFL had been signaled as a strategy to meet identified risks, and the approval of the Head of School.

Planning for the symposium was a collaborative process between the course leaders and FLI's Strategic Projects Coordinator (SPC), with the role of the SPC ranging from approval of the team's plans to complete immersion in all stages of the planning process, depending on the level of knowledge, experience and confidence of the course leaders, their geographic proximity (more involvement was requested when on the same campus), and the level of familiarity with the course leaders (more involvement when the leaders had worked previously with the SPC). Planning usually involved discussion around the BFL principles and perspectives, specific course needs, current BFL awareness, potential activities and the nature of FLI's involvement in the symposium. Agendas were formed, and action plans generated.

Some symposium teams decided to include pre-symposium experiences to orientate their teams to FLI's suggested process and raise awareness of the affordances of selected institutional technologies. The leaders felt that this would better place their team to make well-considered design decisions on the day of the symposium.

At least one member of the FLI team attended each symposium, which ranged from 1-3 days (consecutive or staged). The Ontario symposiums were the only exception to this, due to the large distances involved, and so instead a DVD titled 'Exploring good practice in BFL' was developed to share approaches and ideas. Assistance on the day ranged from contributing to group activities and offering ideas/addressing misconceptions to taking a major role in facilitating some or all of the Symposium.

After the Symposium, activities were limited to follow-up meetings / conversations to assess progress regarding the development of the strategy and its implementation, and in one case helping to draft the BFL strategy. For the course team, the post-symposium phase is when the bulk of the work needed to be achieved, yet it was also the phase when there were the most demands on their time, meaning not all achieved what they'd hoped.

## Outcomes

The outcomes varied depending on the stage of team development and experience in course design. For teams new to course level design, significant time was required to raise awareness of what was happening in the course beyond one's individual subjects, of good practice in BFL and how the team might work together most effectively. While not directly related to the symposium goals, these are a necessary precursor to developing a BFL strategy.

The findings suggested that Course Directors and their Educational Designers used the symposium process to 'try out' leadership practices on the job by clarifying and developing a shared vision of BFL, supporting collaborative planning, helping their teams reflect on their own practice and forming strategies to improve that practice. In particular, the symposia:

- **Helped the leaders to clarify and strengthen their leadership role.** As one Course Director stated, "it enhanced my role as a leader...[and] empowered me with the right approach";
- **Provided clarity and addressed misconceptions about BFL;** and
- **Provided opportunities to experiment with and 'kickstart' the development of the course team,** which were later built on as each course leader worked independently with their teams. For some this meant moving from 'ineffective' discipline meetings to more focused course team structures, encouraging more transparent analysis and reflection on current practices, and exploring different roles. As one Educational Designer commented, "In our symposium we explored what the different roles were and why it's important to have those people there those different roles...I found that was the biggest learning curve for leadership".

At the time of writing, the most comprehensive course strategy developed was for the *Bachelor of Agricultural Business Management* (BABM). It included statements of the team's reflections



on learning in the digital age in the context of their discipline, their rationale for incorporating BFL, the underlying principles that they have agreed will guide their strategy development, a visual map of what ICTs are currently being used in the course, notes on the teams reflections pedagogy, interactions, learning spaces, ICTs and multi-literacies in their course and a draft 5-year plan for enhancing BFL. This plan included the following:

- Enhancements to community engagement,
- A consistent, course-level strategy for student feedback,
- Extended mentoring strategy from first year to whole course (including distance students) and incorporating netiquette and lifelong learning skills
- Optimising teaching time for active learning
- Exploring simulations and video to cope with changed semester times that no longer allow for full coverage of crop cycles
- Enhancing the ability of each teacher to foster stronger presence in their subjects
- Extend professional learning networks for staff
- Exploring mobile learning as an alternative to email for announcements
- Incorporating student choice in learning spaces and assessment
- Professional development to enhance digital literacy of staff

The Ontario School of Education also developed a draft strategy, and in the months following the symposium had implemented small pilots using PebblePad for blogging and portfolio development, wikis to respond to readings, ‘flipping’ the classroom, providing more student choice in assessments, moving from paper to online assignment submission and feedback, online sharing for peer feedback, and sharing resources and completing surveys in Googledocs. Similarly, the Bachelor of Social work had compiled an initial reflection on the symposium and had begun to action strategies for developing course teams and exploring selected new technologies.

Overall, most strategies developed augmented or substituted current activities, though a few aimed to transform learning and teaching through significant task redesign. In terms of implementation of the strategies, longitudinal studies are required to find out if the limited implementation achieved so far is temporary, or if the symposiums will lead to few tangible outcomes.

## Challenges / Limitations

The CSU Degree presented challenges for the newly appointed Course Directors, who needed to work together to establish the role as it moved from a largely administrative role to strategic development and review of courses, leading and managing curriculum development and quality assurance. Further, the roles were being implemented in different ways and according to

different timelines in each Faculty, which in some cases impacted on the time available for curriculum development work.

In addition, the CSUDegree challenged course teams, many of whom had not worked collaboratively as teams in the past and were still embedded in the old paradigm of individual subject design, with the course leader completing most of the course-level planning and reporting independently. For the symposium recipients, some of the most significant challenges included:

- Limited history of meeting and working as a course team,
- Lack of course team processes,
- Lack of course mapping, leading to limited understanding of what was happening across the whole course experience,
- Highly variable understanding of BFL and experience in course level design,
- Breadth of approaches to learning, teaching and assessment,
- Skeptical attitudes regarding the change process, and
- Expectations of being told they were doing the wrong thing.

In terms of limitations, the Symposiums were initially designed as an initiative to enhance engagement and curriculum renewal in relation to BFL, not as a strategy to develop learning leaders. So while this case study can be used to develop a story about how learning leadership has (or hasn't) been strengthened incidentally through the initiative, the strategies put in place weren't necessarily designed to support leadership development. In addition, the case study was developed only six months after the first symposium was held, less for later symposiums, making it difficult to make any kind of evaluation of whether the symposiums indeed assisted the development of BFL learning leaders. For such claims to be made, more extensive longitudinal studies would be required.

While these limitations have been very visible in the development of the case study, other equally limiting factors were faced in its development. These are summarised as follows:

- There were limited respondents to questionnaire and focus group, and not all symposiums were represented;
- The questionnaire was only offered to those leading the symposiums (Course Directors and their Educational Designers), and so relies on their perceptions of their own growth in understanding and leadership, rather than those within their course teams; and
- Few course teams, at the time of writing, had completed their strategy documents, and even less had completed examples to share. This limited the possible document analysis, and leaves the case study relying on the assumption that these will be developed in the near future.

## Connections, Collegiality & Networks

The symposiums themselves were designed to foster connections, collegiality and networks within the course team. However, there's little evidence at this stage that the symposiums have enhanced connections beyond those teams. Anecdotally, much informal sharing has occurred, but this doesn't seem to have extended to formal presentations to others as yet.

Each course symposium involved a range of activities, from presentations to paired, small and whole group activities deliberately designed to encourage the participation and input of all course team members. A strong emerging theme has been the usefulness of the symposia in helping the course leaders from their course teams.

*We have a regular monthly discipline meeting...and sometimes we just don't get anything achieved...One of the consequences of the BFL symposium was that I've come up with a structure for four course teams potentially five course teams within our discipline group...one of the things I wanted to do was to test it out and it worked well I think...12 months from now I'll tell you what we learned and what we've implemented in the other proposed course teams, where the learning worked well....and I think it will. I was impressed (Course Director 1).*

Similarly, other course leaders spoke of the symposium as enabling academics to feel more comfortable in being transparent as individual lecturers and looking at each other's subjects. Each agreed that the development of these processes took time and a learning curve for all involved.

## Reflective Practice & Practice Experimentation

The course symposiums, by nature, encouraged staff members to reflect on their current practice in course design and delivery, particular challenges that were being faced, and possible design solutions to those challenges. The importance of this 'space' for reflection was demonstrated through the following comment:

*We used the blended and flexible learning (BFL) symposium as a reflective period of time, otherwise we just wouldn't dedicate that time to it... [We realised] that we are already doing BFL. We didn't know it was BFL we didn't label it as BFL, but we were already doing it. That was a positive for us...I [as Course Director, also] had the opportunity to reflect on it further because I had to put the document together. That was very good....the fact that I had to write [the document]...I was forced to have a period of reflective practice which I wouldn't normally have (Course Director 2).*

Different teams tackled reflection in different ways, and had different purposes for their reflection on action (Schön, 1983) based on their context. This is evident in the kinds of activities that emerged, for example:

- The BABM team reflected on how the changed semester times had affected their ability to demonstrate to students the full development cycle of crops. As a result, they incorporated a strategy to look at crop simulations and video as options for demonstrating this virtually.
- Other teams reflected at a more personal level, focusing on what each member wanted to gain and didn't want to lose as a result of the renewal process, as well as their own strengths and role in the team.
- Others reflected individually and in groups on desired graduate experiences and attributes, mapping these visually to determine commonalities and differences between groups, and reformulating a shared set of course goals around these.

The teams also used the opportunity to focus on those things that were working in their course, and those that needed improvement:

*The key things were the backward mapping that we did. The second key thing was working in the small group...was great...And the third thing was assessments; the recognition that the assessment needs reworking across our whole course...We have far too many focuses...and we need have fewer of them and more depth. Some of the issues for students working in industry actually are about unlearning unhelpful bad behaviours and we need a strategy for that. We need to address the issue of multi-entry points (Course Director 1).*

In most cases, these reflections have led to some early practice experimentation in a wide range of areas, including ePortfolios, self-assessment tools and online meetings, though the focus has been largely on the development of a course level strategy.

## Reflections on Learning Leadership

By 2011, the expectations, functions and realities of the new CSU course leaders were still being fully conceptualised. Many of those new to the role were experiencing a period of adjustment, with some taking on the leadership of course design and curriculum renewal more quickly and easily than others. Some brought a wealth of experience and focus to the curriculum development aspects of the role, while others aimed for these ideals but reported being limited by overwhelming administrative responsibilities. Still others remained locked into a less collaborative model of curriculum design, and appeared not to have moved far from the previous conceptions of the Course Coordinator model.

Similarly, there appeared to be some variance in terms of the involvement and influence of support staff in curriculum renewal. For example, Educational Designers in some schools have played a co-leadership role with Course Directors, sometimes resulting in shared publications, while this has been less apparent in other schools.

This complexity of articulating the role of course leaders is reflective of experiences across the sector. Krause et al. (2010) found that the role of course leader can involve a wide range of responsibilities, including curriculum design, quality assurance, pastoral care, mentoring for

academic staff, marketing, administration and managing complex academic and professional teams. They also found that roles were ambiguously defined and interpreted variably by individuals.

Krause et al. (2010) also report on the many challenges involved in taking on a course leadership role, including inadequate role clarification and induction, limited professional development and issues of 'leadership without power', workload issues and difficulties of working across campuses. Each of these has been experienced to some degree by the new CSU Course Directors. Thus, while the CSUDegree and its reconception of Course Directors encapsulated a vision of course leadership through curriculum renewal, the enactment of that vision is continuing to be an ongoing process.

The course team symposiums were one small measure to provide opportunities for course teams to collaboratively engage with course design through a focus on blended and flexible learning. Indirectly, they also provided an opportunity for Course Directors to build leadership experience in their own, authentic context. This approach is supported by various studies that have found leadership capacity building to be most effective when conducted in a contextually appropriate way that involves authentic learning activities (Herrington, 2006; Scott, Coates & Anderson, 2008). Burgoyne, Mackness and Williams (2009 as cited in Parrish, 2011 p.42) found that providing opportunities for leaders to 'try out' leadership practices on the job along with coaching and mentoring were effective in supporting the development of leaders. Through providing funding support for teams to come together and mentoring support for both Course Directors and their teams, it was hoped that the symposiums might assist in this process of transition from individual subject design to whole course design, based on the new CSUDegree framework.

The Course Directors and Educational Designers each had designated leadership roles in course design and curriculum renewal; therefore, the symposiums can be seen as utilising a model of delegated leadership. While there are early indications that the symposiums have had some impact on the development of Course Directors and Educational Designers as learning leaders, further research is required before any conclusions can be made. At a minimum, they encouraged leaders to think quite deeply about their role:

*I'm somebody who subscribes to models of leadership that are transformational rather than transactional leadership. And so, for me personally, what I'm trying to do in the discipline as a whole is get big picture agreements about what are the outcomes our students need to have when they graduate...then the three areas that I think that I need to have real leadership in is in the management of personalities...management of the work culture, and that is part of the reason why I want to build the importance of the teacher and not see them as merely technicians that impose a technology, but that they are to provide inspiration and aspirations for students...and then [to build a student culture] where those students feel as though, and in fact are, treated as individuals and we get to know them in a significant way (Course Director 1).*

This Course Director took on the principle leadership role as he felt others in his team needed to divide their attention between teaching and research; others preferred to 'lead from behind' or share leadership with other team members who had specific learning expertise.

Given the significance of the course leadership role, especially in our current climate of rapid change, institutions need to explore a range of approaches to supporting course leaders' personal learning about their role. Although one-off Course Team Symposia can never provide all that course team leaders require to lead innovative course design, nevertheless they may provide valuable and much needed launch pads for trying out a range of strategies 'on the job' that can then be refined and transferred for use with other course teams.

# Acknowledgements

Thanks to those Course Directors and Educational Designers who gave their time to share their experiences and reflections through this case study.

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## Appendix E A Sample of Artefacts (Existing Data) that Informed the CSU Case Studies

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# Appendix F Evaluation report on the project: “Learning leadership in Higher Education – the big and small actions of many people”.

## Final Evaluation

Prepared by Associate Professor Regine Wagner, formerly Director of Higher Education Programs, School of Education, Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, Melbourne, Australia.

**Project title:** *Managing institutional change through distributive leadership approaches: Engaging academics and teaching support staff in blended and flexible learning*

**Project question:** What do the strategies and activities designed to foster change in blended and flexible learning and distance education developed at Charles Sturt University (Australia) and Massey University (NZ) help us to understand about learning leadership?

## Evaluation Summary

The evaluation approach and insights outlined in this evaluation document reflect the starting point of my involvement as an Evaluator of the project in November 2011, which actually occurred some months after the project commenced. The original evaluation strategy included formative and summative elements that reflected the original project aims. These were being reconsidered in the form of a project adjustment by the time I accepted the commission.

The project began its life with the following title: *Managing institutional change through distributive leadership approaches: Engaging academics and teaching support staff in blended and flexible learning*. When I joined the project: ethics approval had been granted at CSU for those case studies that required additional data collection; the collection of existing data available in the public domain had been largely completed, a communications plan had been written; the *wikiResearcher* required by the contract was up-to-date; the Advisory Group had met twice; the research team had held numerous skype meetings; Progress Report 1 had been submitted; and a presentation of the research had been accepted for the December 2011 *ascilite* conference (See *Dissemination*, below).

I recommended two approaches to evaluation. The first was a factual focus that considered the project from the perspective of the signed contract with the funding body, such as deliverables, timelines, ethics approval where required, progress reports and so on. This focus provided the research team with surety in terms of progress as agreed in relationship to contractual obligations. These obligations were met.

The second approach was formative and summative and derived from critical incidents. A critical incident approach (Angelides, 2001) was recommended because it seemed useful as a mechanism for assisting the research team through project adjustment. Critical incidents included three broad areas: those identified as departures from the original project aims; those

identified by the Chief Investigator in terms of conceptual and methodological “sticking points”; and those emerging as the research partnership developed between Charles Sturt University (CSU) and Massey University (MU). Data collection methods included document analysis and one-to-one and group interviews. A number of key questions also informed the evaluation; these are detailed in full below.

In summary, three critical incidents were considered and the evaluation findings were fed back into the research team process in a timely manner. Data collected for Part B were private and formative and not reported in this evaluation report.

- 1 Adjustments to methodology and conceptual clarification: how did project adjustments transform the project? How did the team orient itself to the adjustments?**
- 2 The decision to combine the two reference groups (CSU- and MU-led projects): What were the pragmatic and conceptual reasons? What were the outcomes? Which problems were solved? Which problems were created?**
- 3 The intention to grow the CSU/MU partnership as a project outcome (desired state): How did the DEHub principles inform the development of the research and the partnership?**

The project adjustment adopted in early November 2011 (discussed further below) was clearly in the minds of the research team as the title of the *ascilite* concise paper made reference to “learning leadership”. However, it had not flowed through to the interpretation of the case studies or to the research question. Formative evaluation assisted in this process.

Throughout November and December, the research team discussed, through email and exemplar, a proposed structure to be used to write the case studies in a way that was common across the two partners and the different case study authors. During January-April, case studies were appropriately developed using the proposed structure, although case study editing continued throughout the early part of the year until May 2012 while the Report was finalised.

Synthesis, interpretation of the data and writing the final Report occurred during March-May 2012. The Report was created using a cloud service known as *Dropbox* and the research team was able to access the report, contribute to it and add comments as the report was written. Finally, a desktop publisher was commissioned to ensure that the report adhered to the DeHub report template requirements, to design a front cover and to produce a short report. The short report approach was based on the Devlin et al (2012) short report, and the Chief Investigator sought and gained permission from Professor Devlin to use that report as a model for the one produced as an outcome of this study.

## Project Adjustment

The original application and title indicated that the research would consider institutional change through the “distributive leadership” lens. It was, in this sense, a theory-testing approach to research. Implicit within the title was a working hypothesis and a conclusion that distributive leadership was the best approach to achieving institutional change. I understand that, at the first Advisory Group meeting (I was not in attendance), the hypothesis testing approach was questioned. As the project progressed in its early stages, this hypothesis could not be sustained

in the context of the four strategies that had been chosen as the basis for the eight case studies. The preliminary development of the case studies revealed a number of different leadership approaches; and all appeared to support innovation. This general finding meant a commitment to “distributive leadership” alone could not be sustained.

Secondly, the “design based” research approach noted in the original project did not fit well with the data collection method. Design-based research is forward looking, similar to action research, and involves the development of new learning designs as data and analysis. This study relied on existing and historic data, drawn from the period 2008-2011.

The project, therefore, needed to adjust in response to fieldwork and to resolve conceptual and methodological dilemmas presented in the original application. To resolve these dilemmas:

- *The research question changed, and became as follows: What do the strategies and activities designed to foster change in blended and flexible learning and distance education developed at Charles Sturt University (Australia) and Massey University (NZ) help us to understand about learning leadership?*
- *At a research workshop at Massey University, New Zealand (31st October-1st November 2011), the Chief Investigator presented a summary of the challenges of the project as a basis for adopting a theory-forming approach. The revised methodology and question were designed to provide the research team with an opportunity to understand innovation through the case studies rather than in response to a hypothesis. This was accepted by the project team, reported to the Advisory Group on 13th December 2011 and noted in Progress Report 2.*

The resolution of the conceptual and methodological dilemmas enabled the research to move forward. Grounded theory approaches to research turn traditional hypothesis-based approaches on their heads. The temptation to compare the case studies to a theory was effectively managed and the Chief Investigator’s expertise in this approach played a role in grounding the study’s findings and lessons in the case studies. As a result, five different approaches to leadership were discerned as at play in the case studies. The project adjustment also enabled the research team to note the qualities that enabled innovation rather than limiting their investigation to simply validating one leadership theory approach.

## Outcomes and deliverables compared to those proposed

The aim of the project was to **build knowledge and understanding of the authentic and situated approaches being used to transform teaching and learning in relation to distance education at Charles Sturt and Massey universities during 2011-2012**. This aim remained central to the project and was achieved despite the project adjustment. The time period under consideration was adjusted to 2008-2011.

The contracted deliverables included: a literature review; institutional analysis; eight case studies; impact mapping and analysis; and a set of principles. Contractual obligations also existed in terms of: maintaining and updating a *wikiresearcher* website established by DeHub; three Progress reports; and a Final report.

In light of project adjustments noted in the November Progress Report, and confirmed in the January Progress report, deliverables were achieved. A review of the literature was developed appropriately derived through the case studies and presented in the Final Report in Chapter 1: *Theoretical underpinning of the case studies*. The approach taken was appropriate.

Impact mapping and analysis was adjusted as noted above in the form of a detailed context piece for both universities. In three of the case studies (Dr John Rafferty, Mr Brad Edlington, and Stream@Massey) connections maps were developed. Impact maps were also developed for the ePortfolio case study. Examples of these maps were included in the Final Report.

At the time of this Evaluation report, the wikiresearcher was up to date. The Progress reports were completed, and the Final Report had been certified as required by Dehub.

The deliverables were exceeded. Inspired by Devlin et al's (2012), *Seven Insights for leading sustainable change in teaching and learning* short report, the research team produced a similar short report and, with the permission of Professor Devlin (email, 17th May 2012), mirrored the approach taken by the latter report. The Short Report may be of to those interested in the area of learning and teaching. The research team also used Delicious as a mechanism to "bundle" links to materials of interest to the research team, and the sector more generally. Links to the Delicious site can be found on the wikiResearcher for the project.

## Challenges in the project

### Conceptual challenges

In addition to conceptual challenges identified above, I think a broader conceptual challenge within the sector influenced this study. Past funding via the ALTC generated considerable interest in leadership related to learning and teaching in Higher Education. The idea that "leadership development" provides a possible solution to quality learning and teaching has become a common viewpoint. Distributive leadership has also emerged as a winner in the ideas arena. This focus makes it difficult for a study to seek other answers - for example, by interrogating workload arrangements and quantifying how much actual time an academic has to engage in innovation.

### Methodological challenges

Design-based research has emerged as a favoured approach to research associated with learning design. It was noted as an emerging paradigm, by the Design Based Research Collective (2003, p.5) and appears to have become favoured within *ascilite* research papers (Seeto & Herrington, 2006; McMahan & Muca, 2007; Brand & Kinash 2010; Steel & Gunn, 2011, to name a few). However, the approach detailed in the funding application did not prove useful to the study, and was successfully changed.

## Governance challenges

Two research projects were conducted by the partners, although the Chief Investigator of the CSU-lead *Learning Leadership* project was not involved in the MU-lead In their own words project. Two different Evaluators were commissioned and evaluated the two projects separately. This arrangement means I can only comment partially on the partnership arrangement in this Evaluation. The research team attempted to manage these governance challenges by designing a communications protocol for the research team and the research team's communication with the Advisory Group. Though well-intentioned, I suspect this led to a lower level of contact with the Advisory Group than might have been possible had a separate protocol existed for the two projects.

## Operational challenges

Eight case studies were developed as data. Seven authors in total were involved in writing the case studies. This operational challenge was successfully met.

## Dissemination challenge

More could be made of the case studies. They appropriately sit aside from the Final Report. However, as artifacts, they contain rich data that could well form the basis of further publications by the author(s) who wrote them and by the research team as a whole.

## Strengths of the Project

### 1. Grounded approach

The project's key strength lay in its grounded approach. The sector is already saturated with leadership models. The sector needs to understand more clearly what happens "on the ground" and how to improve it in quite practical ways. Though limited in scope and in depth (in that it did not involve evaluation) this study provided an example of the kind of work that needs to be done. Given that the sector spends millions of dollars annually on strategies quite similar to those in the case studies, it is a step in the right direction to find out more about how they work and, in the future, whether they work. This is a difficult undertaking, given ethical, political and institutional sensitivities.

### 2. Possible improvements

#### Improvements by DeHub

The DeHub provided Final Report template guidelines and certification requirements to the research team some six weeks before the contracted end of the project. Given the projects had been conducted for many months, the provision of guidelines and requirements so late in the piece could have been handled much more effectively - and earlier. The guidelines also noted that all publishable materials needed DEEWA approval, with two weeks allowed for approval to be granted. No process was noted as to how this process might work or how the project team could achieve this stipulation by the 30th June 2012.



#### **Future research partnerships**

The research partners could widen the circle of participation to ensure the partnership develops in a deep way.

#### **Stakeholder engagement**

Strengthen the involvement of stakeholders at each institution.

#### **Publications**

A publications protocol could be adopted for future projects. This is particularly important in a project that involves numerous authors, the intersection of individual and institutional Intellectual Property, and the creation of case studies with sole or shared authorship different to the authorship of the Full Report.

### **3. Lessons of value to other projects**

The use of action research (even when called design-based research) requires certain methods, timelines, processes and the involvement of participants in an ongoing way. It should be avoided in research grant applications unless action research-type processes follow as the method.

## **Conclusion**

Eight in-depth case studies of strategies and activities used at CSU and MU to foster learning leadership in blended and flexible learning and distance education were successfully developed. Despite the specificity of the case studies and their limitations, the outcomes have provided an interesting addition to the typical “silver bullet” leadership development approach. The sector needs more studies such as this to better understand the nuanced, complex nature of an institution as a basis for fostering change in ways that make sense at the macro, meso and micro levels of the institution.



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# Appendix 1 Mid-way Evaluation Report

**Working title:** *Institutional change through distributive leadership approaches: Stories of adaptation in blended and flexible learning and distance education. A research partnership between Charles Sturt and Massey Universities.*

Prepared by Associate Professor Regine Wagner, formerly Director of Higher Education Programs, School of Education, Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, Melbourne, Australia.  
14th January, 2012

## Introduction

This mid-way evaluation report covers the CSU-led project conducted as parts of the DEHub funded partnership research, “Institutional change through distributive leadership approaches: Stories of adaptation in blended and flexible learning and distance education”.

Due to unforeseen circumstances, and a change in Evaluator, the evaluation process was delayed and did not commence until October 2011. The evaluation process reported herein was conducted between October and December 2011 and covered project activities undertaken in 2011. The Evaluator attended (virtually) the CSU Massey research workshop (Massey University, New Zealand November 2011) and the External Advisory Committee meeting (13 December 2011). In addition, the evaluator had access to all documents, web communication sites, meetings of the research team and the advisory group. In addition, the evaluator conducted confidential interviews with each member of the research team. The Evaluator has authored a page in wikiResearcher to outline the evaluation approach taken: <[www.wikiresearcher.org/DEHubResearchProject/Charles\\_Sturt\\_University/Evaluation](http://www.wikiresearcher.org/DEHubResearchProject/Charles_Sturt_University/Evaluation)>

As the project itself, this report is a work in progress and attempts to capture the current state of affairs across basic operational indicators and conceptual and methodological developments. Evaluation to date included summative and formative evaluation approaches. This report is brief and summative rather than detailed. Its aim is to provide useful feedback to the various stakeholders prior to the end of the year. A more detailed report will be provided at the end of the project.

## Project Description

The project consists of qualitative research into the change strategies and activities adopted by Charles Sturt (CSU) and Massey (MU) Universities in relation to blended and flexible learning, open and distance education. The main focus of the project is to understand the connection between those strategies and activities, and the development of learning leadership in both institutions. The project methodology is based on eight retrospective case studies, with six being provided by CSU and two by MU. The case studies are guided by the following research question:

*What do the strategies and activities developed at CSU and Massey (to foster change in BFL, open and DE) help us to understand about learning leadership?*

## Summary of Results

- The project is on time and on target across its milestones, deliverables, reporting requirements and communications plan. The operational processes are transparent and well documented, the budget is in hand. Expenditure of the budget is consistent with contractual arrangements.
- Staffing is stable and individual staff members are clear about their roles and responsibilities. Necessary amendments to the conceptual and methodological framework have been made and communicated to all project staff and External Advisory Committee.
- The research partnership and collaboration between both universities has necessitated and facilitated a broadening of the original theoretical and conceptual base, especially in relation to the “leadership” framework.

The research partnership and collaboration between both universities has necessitated and facilitated a broadening of the original theoretical and conceptual base, especially in relation to the “leadership” framework.

## Two Evaluation Approaches

The evaluator adopted two distinct approaches to the evaluation;

### *Part A Operational Evaluation (factual and summative)*

- Part A provides an empirical approach to the operational domain of the research, i.e. reporting, communication, timelines, budget, documentation etc. This is factual and summative and predominately based on artefacts. The information will be reported to DeHub in the mid-way and final reports.

### *Part B. Process evaluation (interpretive, explorative and formative)*

- Part B provides a constructivist approach to the research process (Luedekke, 1999). This considers individual and collective meaning making of identified critical incidents in the implementation of the research, and the way these critical incidents shape the research methodology, findings and recommendations. It will be interpretive, explorative and formative and predominately based on reflective conversations. This process aims to qualitatively assist the research process. This information will be used internally, as part of the research process, and will only be reported in a general sense to DeHub.

## Operational Evaluation (factual and summative)

The operational evaluation was based on three types of information sources

### 1. Document analysis

- Project Application and Contract
- Reports to DEHub
- Reports to Advisory Committee
- Workshop agendas, reports and ppts.
- DEHub principles
- Ethics Application

### 2. Web communications scan

- DEHub Wiki Researcher
- Webfolio
- Project Manager' eportfolio project blog

### 3. Conversations with the CI and the Project Manager

## Findings – Part A

### 1. Project conceptualisation and title changes.

The project has undergone several title changes, reflecting an increasing adaptation of the project to its pragmatic and conceptual imperatives and the different partner contributions. “Strategic Change in Blended and Flexible Learning through Distributive Leadership” (Project Application), was the original title, by June 2011 it had become “(Fostering) Institutional change through distributive leadership approaches: Stories of adaptation in blended and flexible learning and distance education” (DEHub Interim Report June 2011, Report to Advisory Committee Aug 2011). “Managing institutional change through distributive leadership approaches: Engaging academics and teaching support staff in blended and flexible learning”.

By November 2011 the title appeared as “Building understanding of learning leadership, innovation and institutional change in blended and flexible, open and distance education” (Childs, M. DeHub Magazine). The changes are significant and represent a broadening of the “leadership” concepts of the research and a potential widening of the audience for the findings of the project. This current understanding of the project was arrived at after considerable conceptual and methodological research, necessitated by the diversity of strategies and

activities to be included in case studies, across both institutions. The original conceptual frame of “distributive leadership” needed to be extended to “learning leadership” to be able to capture the rich variety of experiences represented in the research. A workshop was conducted to introduce all team members to the changes. The adoption of “learning leadership” as the conceptual frame is grounded in the relevant literature and has resulted in an improved “fit” of concept, methodology, and case study reporting.

## 2. Project Deliverables

The development of project deliverables was on track by December 2011

Deliverable	Progress
Interim Reporting	On track
Contribution to DEHub Magazine	December 2011
Project presented to Ascilite Conference	December 2011
Literature Review	In progress, addition “ learning leadership”
WikiResearcher	Page established and updated regularly
Eight case studies (6 CSU, 2 Massey)	Ethics approval gained (CSU) Ethics approval in progress (Massey) Data collection completed (CSU) Data collection commenced (Massey) Reporting framework established and data collection and write-up in progress. Synthesis and analysis to commence early 2012
Impact Mapping and Analysis	Concurrent to data collection, summary findings included in data analysis
Institutional Context	Descriptions and analysis in progress at each institution.
A Set of Principles	To be extracted from the final analysis

## 3. External Advisory Group

The EAG has met on three occasions, and the Evaluator attended the December 13th 2011 meeting. Evaluation has yet to occur of the EAG.

## 4. Budget

Expenditure of the budget is consistent with contractual arrangements.

## Process evaluation (interpretive, explorative and formative)

A critical incident approach was adopted (Angelides, 2001). It focused on incidents where decisions made had the potential of impacting on the whole project. This part of the evaluation was conducted as reflective conversations with the whole team (November 2011) and confidential interviews with each team member (December 2011). The exploration of each critical incident

was supported by relevant project documentation, for example the project application, DEHub partnership principles and workshop and meeting materials. Themes emerging from the conversations and discussion were collected and will be presented back to the team early in 2012.

For the purpose of the mid-way evaluation, the following three incidents were identified as they reflected different activity levels of the research, i.e. research implementation, governance and desired states:

- Adjustments to methodology and conceptual clarification: how did they transform the project, how did the research team respond, how did the team orient itself to the adjustments? (research implementation)
- The decision to combine the two reference groups (CSU and Massey led projects): what were the pragmatic and conceptual reasons? What are the outcomes? Which problems were solved, which were created? (governance)
- The intention to grow the CSU/Massey partnership as a project outcome (desired state). How did the DEHub principles inform the development of the research and the partnership?

Noting that the principles were developed for a larger context, the team reflected on each in line with their experience of the collaboration between the partners. Whilst some principles are clearly more applicable than others, the table below was seen as a useful “benchmark” for further exploration.

## Future Actions (January-June 2012)

There are two main activities scheduled for the period.

- As part of the summative evaluation process, consideration will be given to the alignment of the research with intended outcomes and efficacy of the research process. The findings of the research will be explored as to their potential utility to stakeholders.
- As part of the formative evaluation, a thematic summary of team member interviews will be provided to the team for further reflection and discussion. A second set of critical incidents will be identified for another round of team evaluation.

## Conclusion

The project meets all mid-way requirements. Operational processes are in hand. The adaptation to the requirements of the research partnership has been successfully managed and new knowledge has informed conceptual and methodological clarification. The project team is to be congratulated on its collaborative stance and commitment to the partnership.

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### Attachment A (mid-way evaluation report)

Principle	Descriptor
Collaborative advantage	Partners create/co-design new value together as opposed to mere exchange. Partners are strengthened by their involvement in the DEHub project
Strategic	The relationship fits major strategic objectives of the partners
Alignment	There is alignment between the vision, mission and goals with the activities of the partners
Interdependence	Partners need each other with their complementary assets and skills
Investment	There is evidence of long-term commitment through financial and resource allocation in the relationship. Partners are resourced appropriately.
Communication	Partners share ideas in the spirit of collaboration
Transparency	Partners have a clear understanding of the management, decision-making and financial allocation of the project.
Integration	Partners develop synergistic ways of working with each other
Multi-disciplinary	Partners develop connections between diverse people at many organizational levels within their institution
Institutionalization	Partnership is given a formal status within the Institution. There are clear responsibilities and transparent decision-making processes.
Integrity	Partners work with each other in the spirit of mutual trust and respect

